



Valencia County



Comprehensive



Land Use Plan



Adopted by the
County Commission
October 7, 2005

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COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN
for
VALENCIA COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

Approved for Distribution by the Valencia County Commission
October 7, 2005

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MID-REGION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS OF NEW MEXICO
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PART I

INTRODUCTION

This Comprehensive Land Use Plan for Valencia County is a general policy document intended to provide guidance to governing officials and local residents in making decisions about current and future development. As a comprehensive plan, this document refers to many subjects and covers a wide range of important County issues; however, the overriding emphasis of this Comprehensive Plan is on regional or areawide land use activities.

Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

The fundamental purpose of this Comprehensive Land Use Plan is to offer County officials an assortment of strategies and recommendations that will help them to manage the future growth and physical development of the County. A comprehensive plan carries out many important functions in addition to serving as a guide to future decision making. It is an expression of the vision of what the community wants to be. It fulfills a legal requirement by the State. It seeks to characterize the county with pertinent information and data. And it establishes a basis for other, more specific types of plans adopted by the County.

With a comprehensive plan in place, one can perceive the direction in which the local government is headed, and distinguish the needs and wants of the community. A comprehensive plan indicates that the County is committed to moving forward in creating an orderly pattern of development and displaying an efficient use of resources. Finally, a comprehensive plan increases the likelihood that a government will be rewarded when it applies for funding assistance.

Mission Statement The following mission statement was adapted (with minimal changes) from an initial mission statement developed during a previous planning process that resulted in the Draft 2002 Comprehensive Plan, which was never adopted:

“Valencia County is a unique, diverse and vibrant community with several traditional, yet distinctively multifaceted settlements. It is the mission of the Comprehensive Plan to nurture these qualities by establishing guiding objectives, policies and goals for shaping growth in the unincorporated Valencia County. This Comprehensive Plan is intended to foster mutually supportive physical, economic, and social systems and to promote civic involvement and responsibility for protecting and enhancing the community’s quality of life.”

This mission statement continues to be relevant to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and is reflected in the adopted goals and objectives prepared for this Plan.

It can also be used as a reference to the recommendations for action that are adopted for implementation of this Comprehensive Plan.

Policy Framework This Plan should be viewed as the highest level plan for the County, providing a framework for other, more detailed and specific plans for projects, programs, or services of the County. This comprehensive plan identifies and analyzes growth and development issues, and indicates how Valencia County officials and local residents would like the County to develop over the next two decades. It is crucial for any developing county to be looking ahead into the future so they can anticipate, rather than react, to change. Importantly, this approved document allows the County to comply with the New Mexico State law requirement that County zoning regulations must be in accordance with a comprehensive plan for the County.

The true value and worth of a comprehensive plan is gained from the process of assembling the plan and using the plan after it has been approved. As the Board of County Commissioners establishes policy over time, this Comprehensive Plan can and should provide a basis for consistent, reasonable, and effective decisions regarding County operations and services to the residents.

Following approval of a comprehensive plan, conditions will eventually change; goals and recommendations will need to be reassessed, making it necessary to revise and update the plan. Therefore, planning must be seen as a continuous process that needs to be modified and updated on a regular basis. Although this is generally a 20-year plan, it will need to be reviewed and revised long before this time is reached. The State of New Mexico Local Government Division recommends that a comprehensive plan be updated once every five years to remain current.

Plan Methodology and Process

The development of this Comprehensive Land Use Plan for Valencia County has followed a complicated and unusual process involving many participants over a period of nearly seven years. Essentially, this Comprehensive Plan document is the culmination of two distinct planning efforts, separated by time, but interrelated through common purpose and objectives. This Comprehensive Plan picked up where a previous planning process ended, and to the extent possible, has remained on track with an earlier draft plan document referred to as the 2002 Draft Comprehensive Plan.

Previous Plans A Comprehensive Plan for Valencia County was last adopted in 1986. That plan was essentially a policy guidance document for the Board of County Commissioners, and contained policy statements accompanied by various strategies for carrying out or implementing the respective policies. It included policies regarding land use, economic development, infrastructure, and

public services and facilities.

Prior to that plan, in 1968, a consultant (Kenneth W. Larsen & Associates) prepared a "Comprehensive Plan – A Guide to the Growth of Belen, Los Lunas, and a Portion of Valencia County" as a combined plan for Belen, Los Lunas, and what was then the eastern portion of Valencia County. At that time, Valencia County spread to the Arizona state line; until Cibola County was created out of the western portion of Valencia County in 1981. That plan was a traditional plan for its time although it was more focused on a capital improvements program for the developed areas of Belen and Los Lunas. Very little of that plan is of value for current day Valencia County.

From a legal point of view, the 1986 Comprehensive Plan is the existing plan, even though it is seriously out of date. In 1998, the Board of County Commissioners of Valencia County appointed a special blue ribbon steering committee to begin the development of a new Comprehensive Plan to replace the 1986 Comprehensive Plan. That planning effort resulted in the 2002 Draft Comprehensive Plan. For various reasons, the 2002 Plan Draft went to the Board of County Commissioners, but was tabled indefinitely. As time passed, it became obvious that the Draft 2002 Plan needed to be reevaluated, salvaged to the extent possible, and updated for the current situation in the County. This Comprehensive Land Use Plan is the result of that effort.

Steering Committee The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee consisted primarily of members of the Valencia County Planning and Zoning Commission, but was supplemented by additional members from each of the Commission districts. The Board of County Commissioners appointed the members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee to oversee the development of this Comprehensive Land Use Plan and provide valuable input to the goals, objectives, and strategies for the future development of the County. As a result of the extensive work done by the previous steering committee (for the 2002 Draft Plan), the new Steering Committee worked hard to sustain, uphold, and update many of the fundamental concepts stated in the 2002 Draft Plan.

Public Participation The Comprehensive Plan went through an extensive public participation process. Four separate workshops and several public hearings permitted Valencia County citizens many opportunities to comment on the Comprehensive Plan. The workshops were publicized in the local newspaper (Valencia County News-Bulletin), on local radio (KARS AM Radio), and on the Valencia County website (www.co.valencia.nm.us). The public hearings at County Commission meetings allowed the public further opportunities to develop and improve the Plan. The accrual of these public participation events helped to foster broad public support for the final Valencia County Comprehensive Plan.

Plan Overview

The Valencia County Comprehensive Land Use Plan is presented in six basic chapters. Chapter 1 describes the purpose, plan methodology, and process of the Plan. Chapter 2 describes the regional character, current development patterns, demographic information, County government facilities and services, transportation systems, natural resources, and County-wide services for public health and safety. Chapter 3 presents demographic projections to the year 2025 for population, housing, and employment. Chapter 3 also analyzes economic trends, activity centers, and future development patterns. Chapter 4 defines the Goals and Objectives that will help to shape the County's development and growth over the next twenty years. Chapter 5 unveils the Action Plan Recommendations that are necessary to execute the Plan. Chapter 6 discloses how the Plan might be implemented and how priorities should be established.

PART II

COUNTY PROFILE

In order to plan for the future, it is necessary to understand the past history and present day conditions that distinguish Valencia County. The following community profile reveals the regional character, history of settlement, current development patterns, demographics, natural resources, infrastructure, and an inventory of County facilities and services.

Regional Character

Valencia County has been evolving as an historically rural and agricultural county with a rich natural and cultural heritage. This precious heritage, along with beautiful landscapes, and the proximity to Albuquerque has made the County a desirable place to live for centuries. In the last decade, the County increased its population by 46% (from 1990 to 2000). Most of this growth can be seen in increased housing (residential) and businesses (commercial), and the reduction in farm land. The various types of land uses (commercial, residential, industrial, agricultural, etc.) make up the character of Valencia County. However, despite the rapid growth, the County has expressed a strong desire to preserve and protect its unique heritage and lands. If properly managed and guided, growth and development can be healthy and beneficial to the County.

Geographic Setting

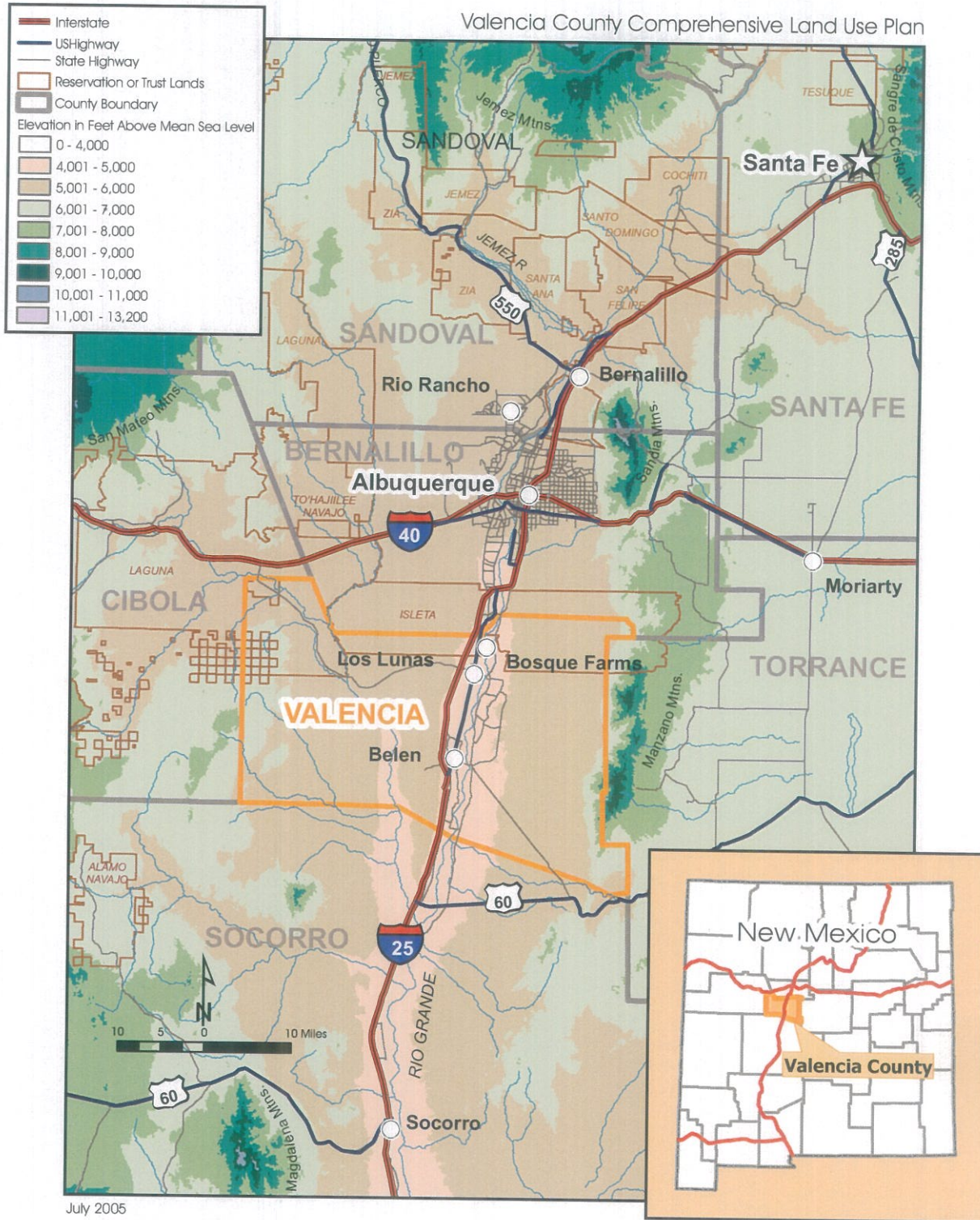
Valencia County covers a land area of 1,458 square miles in central New Mexico. The County is bordered by Bernalillo County to the north, Torrance County to the east, Cibola County to the west, and Socorro County to the south (see Figure 1). Natural features of the County include the massive Manzano Mountains to the east; the fertile Rio Grande and its lush Bosque which bisects the County, and the Rio Puerco valley to the west.

The County has three municipalities (Belen, Bosque Farms, and Los Lunas) and a number of unincorporated communities (see Figure 2). Valencia County is also considered part of the Rio Abajo. Based on historical geography, the area below La Bajada near Santa Fe is called the Rio Abajo (lower river) valley, while the Espanola Valley is called the Rio Arriba (upper river).



Manzano Mountains in Valencia County

Valencia County Comprehensive Land Use Plan

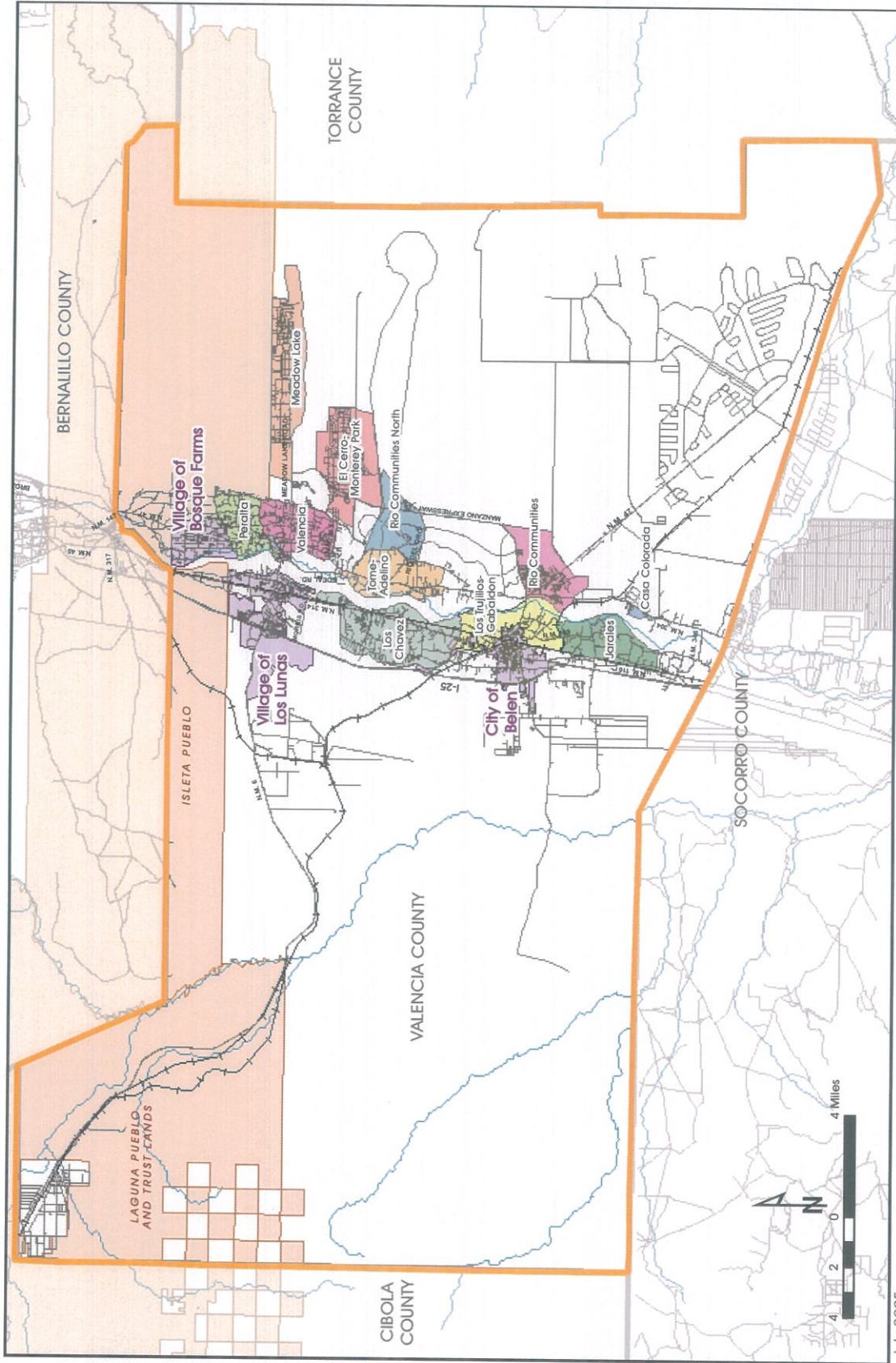


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Figure 1
Regional Map

Source: NM Resource Geographic Information System,
 60 meter state dem elevation data; MRCOG.



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Figure 2
Incorporated Towns and
2000 Census Designated Places

Source: US Bureau of the Census, 2000 Census.

Development History Named after Juan de Valencia and created in 1844 by the Republic of Mexico, Valencia County was a large, agrarian, and heavily settled partido (local administrative unit) in what was then known as the lower Rio Grande, or Rio Abajo, valley. While not officially recognized as a county until the nineteenth century, the Rio Abajo was actually one of the oldest settled areas in what would become the United States.

Settlements occurred primarily along the fertile river flood plain where it was most suitable for raising livestock and agriculture. In addition, the proximity to the Camino Real route traveling to and from Mexico (New Spain), subsequent stage lines, and eventually the railroad made settlement in Valencia County a logical occurrence. While Valencia County originally extended as far west as the Arizona state boundary in present day Cibola County, and including numerous settlements westward, the focus of this historical synopsis is on the Rio Abajo.



Agriculture in Valencia County

Populations traditionally lived and traveled along the Rio Grande. From present day Isleta Pueblo to Casa Colorado in the southern part of the County, it is said that as many as five Pueblos existed, primarily consisting of the Tiwa (or Tigua) Indians. In the 1530s, however, Europeans discovered this northern frontier of New Spain. By 1539, a French friar had explored the area and reported his findings to the Viceroy of New Spain. In 1540, Francisco Vasquez de Coronado led a brief expedition into the area in an effort to find the elusive Seven Cities of Gold. And in 1598, Don Juan de Onate established the Kingdom of New Mexico and Spanish settlers began arriving in the Rio Abajo soon after. During the early 1600s, there were more than a thousand Spaniards who had settled in the area.

In 1680, the Pueblo Revolt struck hard in this first-settled area. Of the 2500 Spaniards living in the new colony, 400 were killed by the Pueblo Indians and all Spanish families were expelled. Don Diego de Vargas subsequently reconquered the area in 1699, and by 1710, the Mission at Isleta had been rebuilt, and the Rio Abajo was resettled by the Spaniards.

Some of the first Spanish families who were settlers in this area were the Tapias and the Manzanares, locating on the north west side of the Rio Grande (in San Clemente); the Olguins, settling on the east side of the Rio Grande (in present day Bosque Farms/Peralta); the Valencias, establishing residence south

of Peralta (in the community of Valencia); and the Thomé Dominges de Mendozas, for whom the Tomé Land Grant was named.

Under Mexican rule, the seat of the partido was at Tomé. The location was changed several times landing in Plaza de Valencia, Peralta, Belen, and finally Los Lunas.

One of the first private land grants given in the Rio Abajo District was the San Clemente in 1716, granted to Don Filix Candelaria. Located on the west side of the Rio Grande, the land was eventually divided in half and sold to become what is now called Los Lentes to the north, and Los Lunas to the south.

The first settlement in present day Valencia County was Tomé founded in 1739. Governor Gaspar Dominguez de Mendoza in Santa Fe granted the land to Juan Varela and several other families. Prior to the official creation of the land grant, Tomé had been a significant stop for travelers along the Camino Real, especially at the Hacienda of Thomé Dominges as early as 1650.

A prominent hill in Tomé was a visible landmark for travelers, and remains a visual point of reference in the County to this day. In 1739, the settlers named their new home Nuestra Señora de la Concepcion de Tomé. By 1743, La Purisima Concepcion De Tomé Catholic church began construction and was ready for services by 1750. That structure stands today as one of the region's oldest churches.



Tomé Hill

The residents of Tomé suffered tremendously by raids from the Apaches and Comanches. Two attacks were particularly fierce, one in 1776, where 23 persons were massacred by marauding Comanches, and one in 1791, where 33 Spanish residents were killed by the Natages Tribe of the Apaches. In the latter attack, Isleta Indians came to the aid of the residents of Tomé, and proved to be great allies.

Despite the raids, Tomé flourished throughout the 18th century and became a prosperous town. In the late 1700s, Tomé became the official seat of the Rio Abajo District. Even as late as 1880, the area's success is illustrated by the Miguel E. Baca House in neighboring Adelina, which was a thriving mercantile store.

In the same year that Tomé was established, Governor Mendoza granted land to Nicolas Duran y Chavez. The community of Los Chavez was thus established 1739. The land was located north of Belen on the west side of the Rio Grande, across from Tomé. The Chavez family was large and prosperous and soon many families came together to form the community of Los Chavez. In fact, nearly 150 years later 124 heads of family or rightful owners of the land grant were recognized. However, the land grant was purchased by Eduardo Otero of Los Lunas in a bitterly contentious land deal that heirs of the land grant unsuccessfully challenged. One of Los Chavez's most famous descendents was U.S. Senator Dennis Chavez, who held office from 1935 until his death in 1964.

Belen was officially recognized as a settlement in 1740 when the area was granted to Captain Diego de Torres and 32 families in 1740. Belen was primarily an agriculture-based economy, and like many of the communities in the Rio Abajo, underwent continual raids from the Apache, the Comanche and the Navajo Indians, even into the early part of the 19th century. As a result of the hostility surrounding the missions and haciendas surrounding it, Belen established a presidio and became a walled town. Some even suggested ways to thwart attacks, such as clustering the houses into quadrangles (present day plazas) and avoiding torresones (towers) as the enemies would simply use the high walls as shelters while they burrowed under them and set fires.

Despite the dangerous environment, Belen, in the mid to late 1800s began to thrive. As an example, Filipe Chavez, thought to be one of the wealthiest traders along the Santa Fe Trail, built a grand house in Belen in 1860, which was used during the Civil War. In 1880, the arrival of the railroad created economic opportunities for most of New Mexico, and particularly Belen. The first bank in Valencia County was opened in Belen in 1903 by John Becker, who was instrumental in making Belen a railroad center. In 1912, as New Mexico was gaining statehood, Belen was capitalizing on the success of the railroad. This made Belen a coveted place to live with Indian raids diminishing and new jobs with the railroad, or related rail enterprises, almost assured. For nearly a century, Belen was the largest residential and commercial center, and one of the largest agricultural centers in Valencia County.

In 1808, Antonio Jose Luna was instrumental in creating Los Lunas, because it was he who acquired the land by laying claim to the original San Clemente grant. The area grew because Luna attracted families and workers to the area to support his growing sheep operation. The family and indeed the region gained wealth by selling sheep to the California market. The wealth increased the stature of the family and brought them political leadership. The marriage of two of Antonio's children to members of the Otero family united the two families and made both families even more powerful than before. The influence of these powerful Republican families, particularly of Salomon Lunas, resulted in the move of the County seat from Tomé to Los Lunas in 1876.

It was not until FDR's New Deal made a clean "Democratic" sweep of the country in the 1930s, including Valencia County, that the reign of the Luna/Otero "dynasty" came to an end. Los Lunas remained an important place in Valencia County, not only because of the railroad, which had passed through the area since the late 1800s, but also because it was for a period of time part of the historic Route 66. Today, Los Lunas is one of the fastest growing communities in the County due to its proximity to Albuquerque, its relatively inexpensive land and housing prices, and its own growing economy.

Other significant settlements in the early years of the Rio Abajo include Los Lentes (a part of the original San Clemente Land Grant), Peralta, Casa Colorado (Turn), Veguita and Los Trujillos-Gabaldon. Today, all or portions of eight Spanish and Mexican land grants lie within Valencia County, however few remain under control by the heirs of the original grant.

At the time New Mexico gained statehood (January 6, 1912), Valencia County stretched from the Manzano Mountains to the Arizona border. There were distinctly different regions within the County comprised of the Rio Grande communities including the County Seat in the eastern portion, and the western portion which centered on the municipalities of Grants and Milan. Established County facilities were based in a western annex in Grants in order to provide adequate services to the distant populations of the western part of the County. However, the primary County government services and facilities were more concentrated in and along the Rio Grande valley where the majority of the population resided.

In 1981, Cibola County was created by the New Mexico Legislature out of the western portion of Valencia County. Although Valencia County was significantly reduced in size, it became more manageable for the County government; and the Rio Grande valley provided a common geography for ongoing County development. Three municipalities have been incorporated to date: City of Belen (1918), Village of Los Lunas (1928), and Village of Bosque Farms (1974). Combined, these municipalities include about one-third of the total population of the County. Although the municipalities are the major commercial centers in the County, dispersed commercial and industrial development is occurring throughout the unincorporated areas.

Cultural Resources Valencia County has an abundance of cultural resources that should be protected and preserved. The County is intersected by three designated Scenic Byways. El Camino Real (meaning Royal Road or King's Highway) served as the main road for the Spanish caravans for over three hundred years and originally extended 1,150 miles from Mexico City to Santa Fe. Historic Route 66 was, at one time, located along present day NM Highway 6. The Abo Pass Trail connects the Salt Missions Trail of Tarrant County and El Camino Real in the southeast portion of Valencia County. Valencia County also has a number of properties on the state and/or national historic registers. A list

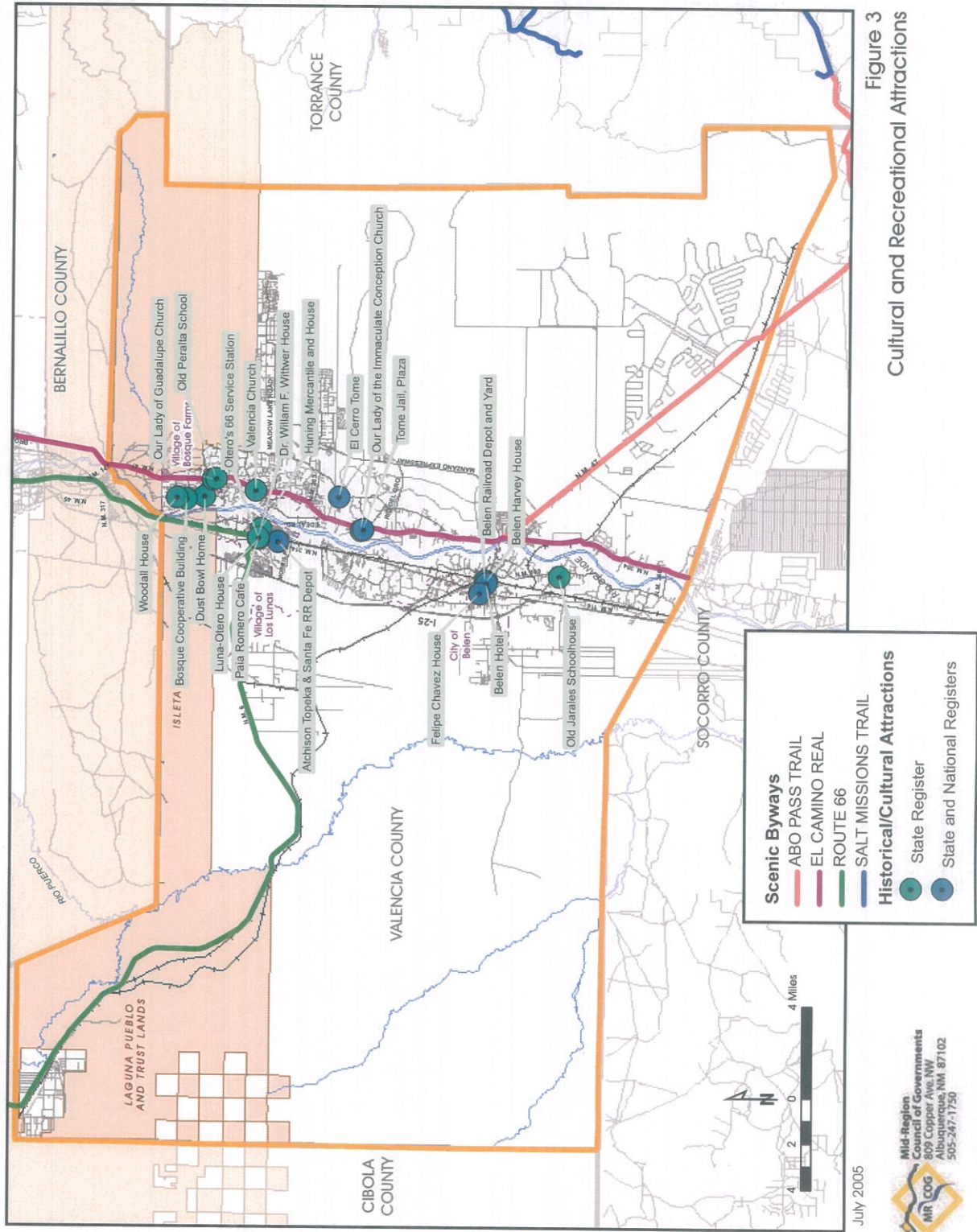
of these locations can be seen in Table 1. A map of these locations and Scenic Byways in Valencia County is shown on Figure 3 (due to confidentiality concerns not every historic property was mapped).

Table 1
Valencia County Properties on the State and National Historic Registers

Community	Name of Property	State Register Date	National Register Date
Adelino	Miguel E. Baca House	7/26/1974	12/11/1978
Belen	Belen Harvey House	10/1/1982	10/28/1983
Belen	Belen Hotel	8/29/1980	11/12/1980
Belen	Felipe Chaves House	4/3/1980	7/4/1980
Belen	Old Jarales Schoolhouse	9/23/1994	
Bosque Farms	Bosque Cooperative Building	3/15/1996	
Bosque Farms	Dust Bowl Home	1/7/1988	
Bosque Farms	Woodall House	2/18/2000	
Isleta	Isleta Pueblo	5/5/1972	9/5/1975
Los Lunas	Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad Depot	3/31/1978	8/1/1979
Los Lunas	Be-jui Tu-ay (Rainbow Village)	2/28/1986	
Los Lunas	Huning Mercantile and House	10/17/1969	
Los Lunas	La Capilla de San Antonio del Los Lentos	10/10/2003	
Los Lunas	Los Lentos Pueblo (LA 951)	2/28/1986	
Los Lunas	Luna-Otero Tranquilino, House	5/18/1973	4/16/1975
Los Lunas	Otero's 66 Service Station	12/6/2002	2/17/2003
Los Lunas	Pottery Mound	6/22/1979	
Los Lunas	Romero, Paia, Café	12/6/1996	
Los Lunas	Dr. William Fredrick Wittwer House	3/8/1985	
Los Trujillos	Pueblo Los Trujillos	2/28/1986	
Peralta	Old Peralta School	6/16/2003	
Peralta	Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church	10/23/1976	
Peralta	Valencia Pueblo (LA 953)	2/28/1986	
Tomé	Comanche Springs Archaeological District	12/3/1976	12/10/1987
Tomé	El Cerro Tomé Site	5/17/1996	7/9/1996
Tomé	Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Church	5/23/1969	
Tomé	Tomé Jail	7/15/1972	10/5/1977
Turn	Casa Colorada del Sur	2/28/1986	
Turn	Pueblo Casa Colorado (LA 50249)	2/28/1986	
Valencia	Valencia Church	10/1/1982	

Source: State Historic Preservation Office

County Communities Eighteen designated County Communities have been identified in Valencia County. This list however, does not preclude the addition of other County Communities in the future. A listing of County Communities, with brief descriptions regarding the character and culture of each



area, can be found below. These County Communities were endorsed for planning purposes by the Valencia County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The three municipalities are listed first, followed by Isleta Pueblo, and then the unincorporated County Communities (which are categorized by geography, going from north to south). Of primary importance to this Comprehensive Plan is the recognition and designation of the unincorporated County Communities.

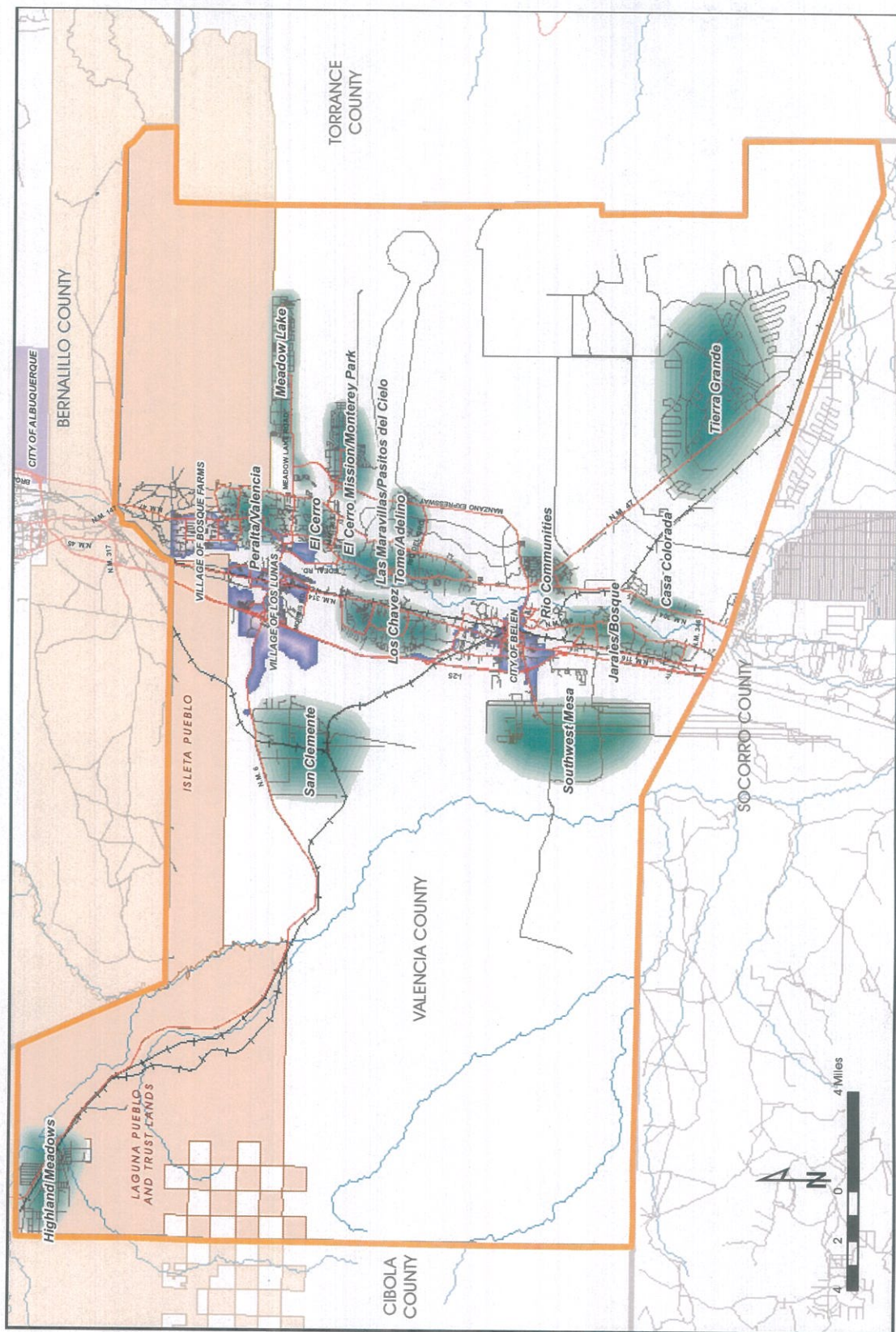
The demographic information describing the communities was obtained from the 2000 Census. As a result, these statistics will have changed by the time this plan is published. Additional tables presenting County Community Statistics can be found in Appendix A. The term CDP stands for Census Designated Place and, according to the United States Census Bureau, are areas "... compromising a densely settled concentration of population that is not within an incorporated place, but is locally identified by a name. CDPs are delineated cooperatively by state and local officials and the Census Bureau, following Census Bureau guidelines." (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000) Block group and block data were collected as well, because some of the County Communities (i.e., Highland Meadows, San Clemente, Southwest Mesa, and Tierra Grande) are not designated as CDPs. Not all County Communities listed below have comparable statistical and demographic information. Some of those communities not designated as CDPs only have population and housing information. A map of the Designated County Communities can be found in Figure 4.

Bosque Farms

The Village of Bosque Farms is located on the east bank of the Rio Grande, approximately 18 miles south of Albuquerque. The Village is bordered by the lands of Isleta Pueblo on its north, east, and west sides. Directly south of the Village is the Peralta/Valencia Community.

The current boundary of Bosque Farms generally follows the delineation of Tract No. 1 of the Gutierrez and Sedillo Land Grant, which was authorized by the King of Spain. With the completion of the drainage ditches and irrigation system by the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District in the 1930s, Bosque Farms evolved into a well-known dairy and farming community. In the early 1960s land was subdivided into small tracts of one acre or less. Bosque Farms became incorporated in 1974, and the population doubled in the 1970s (from 1,600 in 1970 to 3,353 in 1980). However, population has grown very slowly since 1980, with the year 2000 population at 3,931. The most recent estimate of the Bosque Farms population by the MRCOG is 4,094 in 2004.

The governing body in Bosque Farms is made up of a Mayor and four Councilors. The Village maintains a centralized water system and wastewater collection and treatment. The form of development in the Village is oriented along an intense commercial strip along N.M. Highway 47 flanked by low density residential neighborhoods and some outlying agricultural croplands.



June 2005

Figure 4
Designated County Communities

The big event in the Village every year is the Bosque Farms Community Fair, which takes place in August. It is the oldest ongoing community fair in Valencia County. Bosque Farms has three designated historic sites: the Bosque Cooperative Building, the Dust Bowl Home, and the Woodall House (which are further identified in Table 1 and Figure 3).

Los Lunas

The Village of Los Lunas is the Valencia County Seat, as well as the largest (in population) and fastest growing municipality in the County. The population jumped from 6,013 in 1990 to 10,034 in 2000. The most recent estimate of the Los Lunas population is 11,370 persons in 2004. The majority of the Village lies near the west bank of the Rio Grande; however, annexations have added land on the east side of the river and to the west of the I-25 freeway. The Village was incorporated in 1928.

Traditionally, Los Lunas was a farming community, but recent growth has made the Village a significant business center and residential cluster in Valencia County. A Mayor and four Councilors govern the municipality. The Village offers typical urban services and has a well developed infrastructure with centralized water supply and wastewater disposal. Most of the commercial development in Los Lunas is located along N.M. Highway 6 and N.M. Highway 314. A major I-25 interchange provides access into the community. As the County Seat, Los Lunas is also the government center of the County.

A number of events take place in Los Lunas every year. These events include the St. Patrick's Day Balloon Rally, the annual Easter egg hunt, the Family Fun Fest, the Independence Day Celebration, and the Christmas Light Parade. Los Lunas has 10 properties on the State and National Historic Registers (found in Table 1 and Figure 3).

Belen

The City of Belen is called the "Hub City" for its central location in New Mexico. Belen is located in south central Valencia County, bordering the west bank of the Rio Grande. Belen is approximately 34 miles south of Albuquerque, and 10 miles south of Los Lunas. Although no incorporated municipalities border Belen, there are some large unincorporated communities nearby such as Rio Communities, Jarales/Bosque, and the Southwest Mesa.

Belen became the primary community and trading center in Valencia County after the King of Spain issued the Nuestra Señora de Belen grant to Captain Deige de Torres and some settlers. The railroad became a major activity center in the City in the 1880s, and continues today as a major shipping point for freight traveling across the United States. The city form is strongly influenced by the railroad with evenly spaced and gridded streets fanning out from the railroad terminal.

Belen was incorporated in 1918, and is governed by a Mayor and four Councilors. The year 2000 Census population for Belen was 6,901 people, while the most recent population is estimated by the MRCOG to be 7,260 in 2004. Typical urban services and facilities are provided to most of the incorporated area. Centralized water and wastewater systems are well established and serve most of the incorporated area.

The City has many events that take place throughout the year. These events include the following: Independence Day Celebration, Oldies Night on Main Street, Our Lady of Belen Fiestas, Rio Abajo Days, Sheriff's Posse Rodeo, Annual Christmas Festival, Belen Electric Light Parade, and La Gran Pastorela de Belen. Historic sites in and around Belen include the Belen Harvey House, Belen Hotel, Felipe Chaves House, and the Old Jarales Schoolhouse (see Table 1 and Figure 3).

Isleta Pueblo

Isleta Pueblo is located at the northern end of Valencia County. The Isleta Pueblo Reservation also extends north into Bernalillo County and east into Torrance County. The modern day members of the Isleta Pueblo are direct descendants of the original inhabitants of the land that is now Valencia County. Today's Isleta Pueblo is a mix of both traditional culture and modern business establishments. Traditional activities such as farming, dancing, making jewelry, pots, quilts, and other crafts are still observed. However, Isleta Pueblo is prospering in the modern world with Indian gaming, Las Vegas style entertainment, dining, golf and other recreational facilities. The year 2000 population for the Isleta Pueblo was 2,912 (2,024 in Bernalillo County and 888 in Valencia County).

Highland Meadows

Highland Meadows is a small community located 38 miles west of the Village of Los Lunas along NM 6. It was designed in the 1960s as a planned development of ten phased units, each consisting of mixed residential and varied light commercial units. The growth of Highland Meadows has been sporadic and slow over the years. The community has few jobs, and the long distance from the rest of the County makes the provision of County services a difficult and expensive proposition. Fire protection is provided by the Highland Meadows Fire District.

According to Census block group data, Highland Meadows has a population of approximately 787 persons, living in 294 housing units. Highland Meadows is characterized by new housing (median year structure built is 1994), above average household size (3.20), relatively low incomes (median household income \$26,500) and high poverty rates (31 percent living below poverty status), and a high percentage of mobile homes (65 percent).

Peralta/Valencia

Peralta/Valencia is located directly south of Bosque Farms in northern Valencia County. The community is also bordered by Isleta Pueblo to the north and east, by the Rio Grande to the west, and by El Cerro to the south. The community of Valencia was established by Captain Francisco Valencia during the mid-17th century. The area was abandoned during the Pueblo revolt of 1860, and then resettled by Christian Indians called genizaros in 1740.

Three properties on the State and National Historic Registers are located in Peralta/Valencia. Those properties are: Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, Old Peralta School, and Valencia Pueblo. Our Lady of Guadalupe Church was built in 1879. The church had a flat roof until 1912 when it was replaced by the pitched roof that remains today.



Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, Peralta

The Sangre de Cristo (Blood of Christ) Church is not on the State or National Historic Register, but has a colorful and violent past. Several tombstones are located in front of the church, one of which belongs to Francisco X. Vigil. On May 25, 1898, Vigil was gunned down in the line of duty while trying to arrest the infamous Bronco Bill and Kid Johnson during the Great Belen Train Robbery.

The community's year 2000 population includes 8,250 residents (Peralta CDP – 3,750, and Valencia CDP – 4,500). Peralta/Valencia has 3,070 housing units (Peralta CDP – 1,407 and Valencia CDP – 1,663). When referring to Peralta and Valencia, they are both identified by statistics for the CDPs. In Peralta, the median year for the dates of all structures built was 1981, while in Valencia it was 1979. The community has a significant percentage of mobile homes. In Peralta, 41 percent of the housing is classified as mobile homes, while in Valencia, 31.5 percent of the housing is mobile homes. A large amount of the land in Peralta/Valencia is agricultural land. However, this land is very desirable to land developers. The Village of Los Lunas has annexed 170 acres of commercial land in this community to date.

The 1999 median household income for the community is higher than both the State (\$34,133) and the County (\$34,099). The 1999 median household income in Peralta was \$38,039, while Valencia was \$40,521. Commuting for Peralta/Valencia residents is generally a long trip, usually to out-of-county jobs.

Fifty-four percent of Peralta residents average a travel time of more than 30 minutes to get to work, while 65 percent of Valencia residents average a travel time of more than 30 minutes to work. Local fire protection is provided by two Fire Districts: Valencia/El Cerro and Peralta.

San Clemente

San Clemente is located just south of NM 6, and west of the Village of Los Lunas. The irregular platting of land in this area is considered to be an antiquated subdivision, as the lots of record were filed before there were any subdivision regulations in the County. The community population is very small; according to Census Block Data, San Clemente has a population of 180, living in 75 housing units. Although relatively close to Los Lunas, virtually no commercial and retail businesses exist in San Clemente. Much of the land in this area is currently utilized for cattle grazing.

Meadow Lake

Meadow Lake is located in the far northeast portion of Valencia County. The community is bordered by Isleta Pueblo to the north, situated east of the Peralta/Valencia community, and with the lower slopes of the Manzano Mountains just a few miles to the east. Meadow Lake was established as a single subdivision in the mid-1950s. Meadow Lake Road is the main access road into and through Meadow Lake, and provides the only access to NM 47. Meadow Lake also has the highest mean travel time (44 minutes) of all Valencia County communities, and it takes more than 30 minutes to get to work for 84.7 percent of the population. Fire protection is provided by the Meadow Lake Fire District. The community also has a community center for seniors and children and a community drinking water system.

Statistics for the Meadow Lake community are from the Meadow Lake CDP. The community has grown since the 1950s and now consists of 1,540 dwelling units with a population of 4,491. Meadow Lake has the highest percentage of mobile homes among Valencia County Communities at 87.5 percent. The residents of the community of Meadow Lake are relatively young, as shown by the median age of only 27.2 (youngest of all Valencia County Communities), and the percentage of those under 15 (32.6). The community also has the lowest percentage of those 65 and over (4.4). As would be expected from the youthful demographics, Meadow Lake has a large average household size, 3.35, which is second highest only to El Cerro/Monterey Park. The median household income (\$25,561) is well below the State (\$34,133), and the County (\$34,099), while the level of those living below poverty status is a relatively high 24.4 percent.

El Cerro

El Cerro is generally bordered on the west by NM 47 and on the north, east, and south by NM 263. The Peralta/Valencia community lies to the north, while the Tome/Adelino community is found just south of El Cerro. The majority

of the land in El Cerro is made up of small tracts (less than 10 acres) of agricultural land. The community has about 1,900 dwelling units. Not much commercial land exists in El Cerro; primarily because of the proximity to many businesses in Los Lunas. Fire protection is provided by the Valencia/El Cerro Fire District.

El Cerro Mission/Monterrey Park

The community of El Cerro Mission/Monterrey Park is located south of the Meadow Lake community and north of the Las Maravillas/Pasitos del Cielo community. The majority of this community is east of the Manzano Expressway. The El Cerro/Monterrey Park CDP has 1,623 dwelling units, and a population of 5,483. This CDP also includes the County Community of El Cerro, mentioned above. El Cerro/Monterrey Park CDP has the largest average household size (3.71) among all Valencia County Communities, the youngest median age (24.2), the largest percentage of persons under 15 (35.3), and the fewest percentage of persons over 65 (3.2). El Cerro Mission Boulevard (which connects to NM 263) and Van Camp Boulevard (which connects to the Manzano Expressway), are the primary roads for this community. Monterrey Park has a small community water system for potable water. The area is served by the Manzano Vista Fire Department at El Cerro Mission.

Los Chavez

The community of Los Chavez is located in central Valencia County, in between the municipalities of Los Lunas and Belen, along the west side of the Rio Grande. The Los Chavez CDP has 5,033 residents, and approximately 1,895 dwelling units. Los Chavez has one of the higher median household incomes among Valencia County Communities (\$38,228). Los Chavez has virtually no multifamily dwelling units (only 0.5 percent); however, the community does have a large percentage of mobile homes (40.1 percent). The majority of workers (55.4 percent) in Los Chavez have a commute longer than 30 minutes.

Los Chavez has significant highway commercial development scattered along NM 314. For example, a Sears retail store, a John Deere dealer, the Cattlemen's Live Auction, and several other local businesses reflect the rural agricultural activities in the community. These businesses provide local job opportunities to the residents of Los Chavez as well as the County.



Old Mill Farm and Ranch Supply in Los Chavez

Tomé/Adelino

Tomé/Adelino is located in central Valencia County just east of the Rio Grande, across the river from Los Chavez. This community contains large areas of irrigated farmland. In fact, Tomé/Adelino still retains several parcels of irrigated land that have 100 acres or more. The 2000 population of Tomé/Adelino is 2,211, and there are 790 residential dwelling units. NM 47, which is a major thoroughfare in Valencia County, cuts right through the middle of Tomé/Adelino and is one of the major arterial roads on the east side of the river. The community has a relatively low median household income (\$27,361), while 18.6 percent of the citizens are living below the poverty status. The housing types are primarily conventional residential (66.9 percent), a fair amount of mobile homes (31.5 percent), and a very small amount of multifamily housing (1.6 percent). It takes the majority (55.3 percent) of Tomé/Adelino residents more than 30 minutes to travel to work.

Tomé/Adelino has several historic sites that contribute to the unique heritage and tradition of this historic community. El Cerro Tomé is the most noticeable, and was a substantial landmark for travelers along the Camino Real. Thousands of people make the annual Good Friday trek up Tomé Hill every year. Along the way they can view up to 1,800 petroglyphs dating back 2,000 years.

Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Church was constructed in 1750 by those families that were awarded the Tomé Land Grant. It is one of the oldest churches of the Rio Abajo. A museum depicting the history of the church and the area is located on the church grounds. The Tomé jail served the County until about the turn of the 20th Century. At one time Tomé served as the County Seat. In 1876, the County Seat was moved to Los Lunas at the urging of Solomon Luna.



Tomé Jail

Often associated with the Tomé/Adelino area is a small community known as La Constancia which adjoins the southern portion of Tomé/Adelino. La Constancia also has a rich history that is part of the early settlement in this area of the County. Another historical property associated with Tomé is the Comanche Springs Archaeological District. This site, located east of the community, was a passage way through the Manzano Mountains used by Comanche and various Plains Indians. The Miguel E. Baca House in Adelino was built in the mid 1800s, and served as a mercantile store for the area.

Las Maravillas/Pasitos del Cielo

The Las Maravillas/Pasitos del Cielo community is located just east of the Tomé/Adelino community on the east mesa and adjacent to the Manzano Expressway. Both Las Maravillas and Pasitos del Cielo are recently developed subdivisions (both less than 15 years old). They are phased, master planned subdivisions with land reserved for parks, open space, pedestrian and bicycle paths; and are administered by the Valley Improvement Association (VIA).

The CDP associated with the Las Maravillas/Pasitos del Cielo community is Rio Communities North (see Figure 2). Rio Communities North CDP has a total population of 1,588, and 618 housing units. The median age in this CDP is the second lowest of all the Valencia County Communities (31.3), and justifiably has a high percentage of persons under the age of 15 (27.8 percent). This is not presently a retirement community, as only 6.7 percent of the population is age 65 and older. The average household size of 2.89 is above the national average of 2.59, and the third highest among Valencia County Communities. The median household income (\$46,773) is the highest among Valencia County Communities, and the percentage of those below poverty status is the lowest (3.9 percent).

Compared to surrounding communities in the County, the housing is very new. The median year for structures built in the community was 1996. The communities with the second newest structures were Los Lunas (1988) and El Cerro/Monterey Park (1988). The housing in this community is almost exclusively conventional single family homes (94.3 percent). There is no multifamily housing and only a small percentage of mobile homes (5.7 percent). It takes the majority (66.7 percent) of those living in this community more than 30 minutes to travel to work.



Housing in Las Maravillas

Southwest Mesa

This community is located directly west of the City of Belen. The Southwest Mesa community is predominantly undeveloped land that borders the escarpment of the west mesa. According to Census Block Data, this community has a year 2000 population of 329 and 131 housing units. The median age is relatively old, at 37.2 years. This area has growth potential exhibited by relatively large new developments such as Sausalito Estates, proximity to Belen, and the presence of employment centers such as the Alexander Municipal Airport and New Mexico Travertine plant.

Rio Communities

Rio Communities is located on the east side of the Rio Grande, directly across from the City of Belen. The Manzano Expressway runs along the northern border of Rio Communities, while NM 47 and NM 304 cross through the community and provide access as well. Rio Communities has industrial and retail commercial services. The level of development and array of services make Rio Communities the most feasible unincorporated community to either incorporate or to be annexed (by the City of Belen).

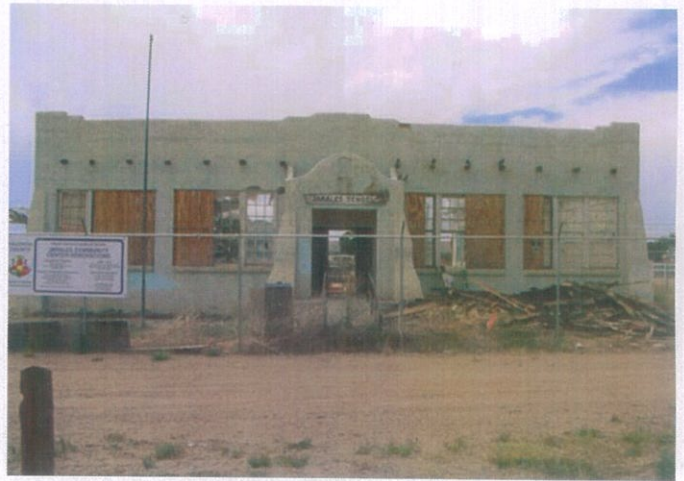
The Rio Communities CDP has a population of 4,213, and 1,905 housing units. The Rio Communities CDP has the oldest median age of 44.5 years old in Valencia County. Over 25 percent are age 65 and over (the highest of all the County Communities), while only 19.3 percent (the second lowest) are under age 15. Rio Communities also has the smallest average household size among County Communities (2.39). Rio Communities has a low percentage of the population below poverty status (7.4), and a high percentage of single family housing (85.6).



Commercial Development in Rio Communities

Jarales/Bosque

Jarales/Bosque is located south of Belen, west of the Rio Grande. This community has remained primarily agricultural in character, with the majority of the land classified as irrigated agriculture (see Figure 6). The Jarales CDP has a population of 1,434, and 542 housing units. The housing in the Jarales CDP is relatively older than most of the rest of the county (median year structures were built in the Jarales CDP is 1976, while Valencia County as a whole is 1983.) Two thirds of the housing (65.9 percent) consists of conventional single family units, while one third are mobile homes (32.7).



Old Jarales Schoolhouse being renovated in 2005

The Old Jarales Schoolhouse is on the State register of historic places. The building is an example of depression-era WPA architecture, built mission style with adobe. The building was originally part of its own school district, was later used the Belen Consolidated Schools, and is now being converted into a community and senior center. The community is also near the Bernardo Waterfowl Area, popular to bird watchers as a stopping and feeding area for migrating birds along the Rio Grande flyway.

Casa Colorado

The community of Casa Colorado is southwest of Jarales/Bosque community on the east side of the river. The majority of land use in Casa Colorado is irrigated agriculture. The community also has some relatively large dairy operations. As of 2000, the Casa Colorado CDP had a population of 56 residing in 19 housing units. The median age was 42.0, while the median household income was \$16,750; and the percentage of those living below the poverty level was 41.2. The homes in this community are relatively older; the median year structure built is 1973. Since the 2000 Census, the Casa Colorado area has been growing rapidly with the development of the Salomon Estates manufactured housing subdivision.

There are two properties that are listed on the State register of historic places. Pueblo Casa Colorado is one of the largest and most intact prehistoric pueblos in the region. Casa Colorado del Sur (a different property than Pueblo Casa Colorado) is the remains of a small Hispanic settlement about 10 miles south of Belen. Archeological evidence indicates Casa Colorado del Sur was occupied from approximately 1823 to the 1880s.

Tierra Grande

Tierra Grande is a large, mostly undeveloped area southeast of Belen and Rio Communities. The community is bordered by National Forest lands to the east in the Manzano Mountains. The southern portion borders the Socorro County line. The location and distance away from Belen and the rest of the County have kept growth to a minimum. Tierra Grande has an estimated population of 105, with 41 housing units. The median age is high, 48.6. Tierra Grande is bisected by NM 47, which connects Belen with the Town of Mountainair in Torrance County. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad

runs along the southwest portion of Tierra Grande, and makes this area an ideal location for light industrial and warehousing uses.



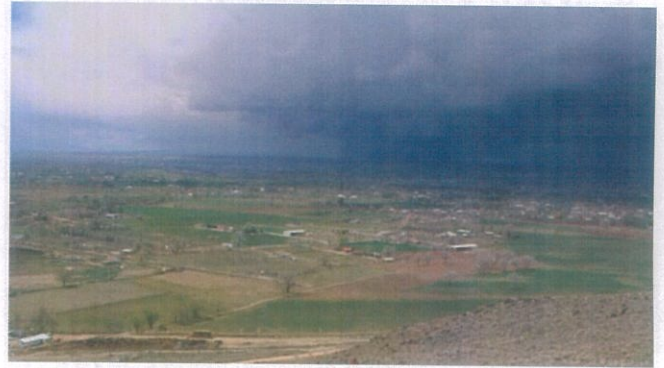
Tierra Grande advertising

Current Development Patterns

There are a number of historical and physical factors that influence the land development patterns of Valencia County and consequently lead to the current form and distribution of development. Although settlement in the region has been traced back to the Anasazi period, most of the significant settlement areas were established by the Pueblo and Spanish communities. The common locating determinant has been access to water. Thus, the Rio Grande valley is the universal attraction for human settlements in this area. All of the incorporated municipalities of the County are adjacent to the river.

The clusters of development along the Rio Grande have grown and prospered for hundreds of years. Agricultural lands prevailed over much of the landscape for many generations. Today, there is competition for available land for urbanizing types of development generally paralleling the river. Unfortunately, the agricultural lands of the valley flood plain are also highly desirable to home and business owners as a place to locate. This has resulted in growing concentrations of development along

the river, although new growth is spilling onto the mesas and uplands of the basin.



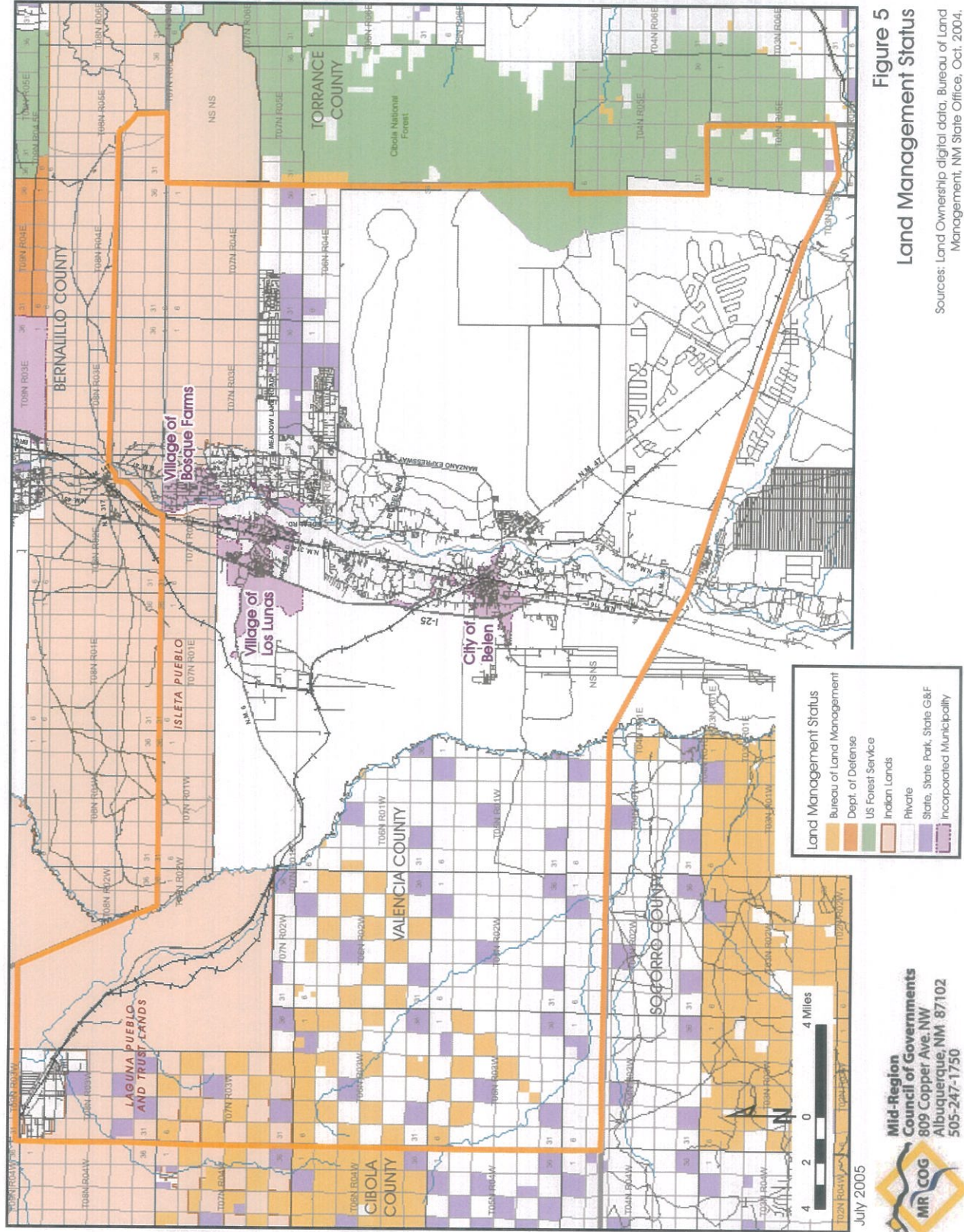
View of Valencia County from Tomé Hill

Another major factor that has played a role in the historical development of the County is the location of travel corridors. Exploratory and trade routes were the beginnings of the highway system in the County today. Railroads also brought in people and goods to help the County grow. The placement of railroad stops has generated urban centers such as the depots at Los Lunas and Belen. Today an interstate freeway and major highways run parallel to the river; although the east-west connections are limited and lead to traffic congestion in the overall County circulation network. Furthermore, the river itself creates a major barrier to the east-west travel in the County.

Of concern to the County today is the sprawling nature of development that occurs outside the incorporated municipalities and creates costly demands for County services and facilities. That pattern will likely continue due to the large extent of previously platted lands; and the challenge to the County will be to direct or steer development to areas more accessible and more cost effective to public services and utilities.

Land Ownership Status The County is comprised of a variety of lands defined by jurisdiction and management status (see Figure 5, Land Management

Valencia County Comprehensive Land Use Plan



Status) including Indian lands (Isleta Pueblo), lands belonging to the State and Federal government, and private land. The portion of Valencia County west of the Rio Puerco is a checkerboard pattern of State-owned land (i.e., State Park and State Game and Fish), U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and private land. There is also a large amount of State land in the northeast section of the County, along Meadow Lake Road. A portion of the Cibola National Forest is located in the far eastern portion of the County. Isleta Pueblo and Laguna Pueblo lands are located in the northern segment of the County. The majority of the unincorporated areas of Valencia County is made up of private land.

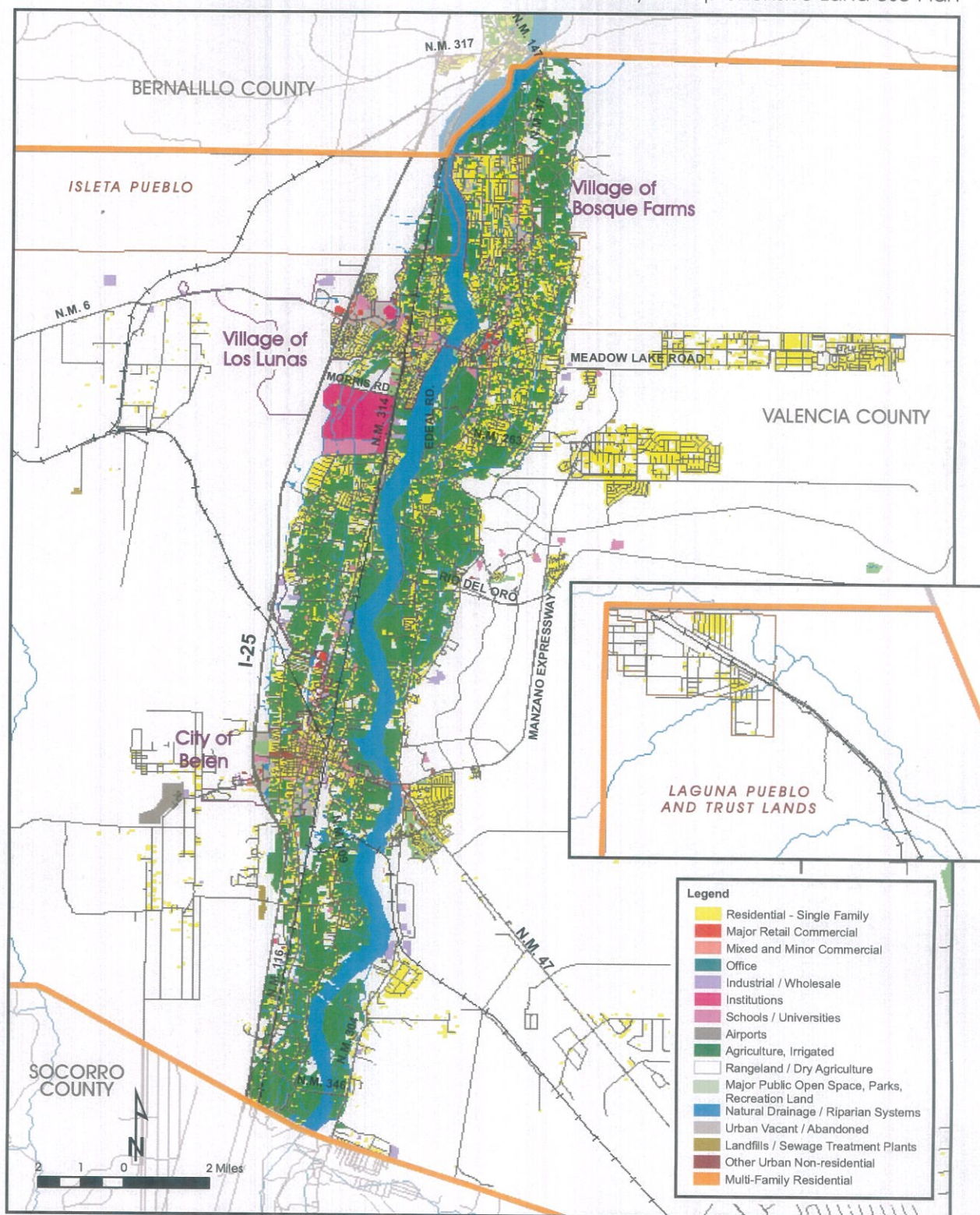
Distribution of Land Use The arrangement, type of development, and intensity of land uses shape the character and value of the County. The manner in which Valencia County manages land use activities will determine the density, location, and utilization of future land. A current (2004) Valencia County land use map is presented in this report (see Figure 6). Table 2, shown below, shows the acreage and percentage of each land use calculated from the land use map. This table contains all land uses in the County excluding all of the open rangeland and vacant land.

Table 2
Valencia County Land Uses

Land Use	Number of Acres	Percent of Total
SF/MH Residential	19,046	27.81
Major Retail Commercial	114	0.17
Minor Retail Commercial	751	1.10
Office	28	0.04
Industrial/Wholesale	901	1.32
Institutions/Hospitals	1,183	1.73
Schools/Universities	684	1.00
Airports	354	0.52
Transportation/ROW	264	0.39
Agriculture (Wet)	23,390	34.15
Open Space/Parks	8,724	12.74
Rivers/Drainage	10,017	14.62
Urban Vacant	1,213	1.77
Land Fills/Sewerage	1,451	2.12
Other	283	0.41
Multifamily Residential	84	0.12
Total	68,487	100.0

The County's land use is divided into categories which include the following: residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural. The majority of Valencia County's land is either residential or agricultural. The municipalities (Belen, Bosque Farms, and Los Lunas) contain a significant amount of commercial land, while industrial land is scattered throughout the County. It is anticipated that the current pattern of residential, commercial, and industrial land

Valencia County Comprehensive Land Use Plan



July 2005

Mid-Region Council of Governments
 809 Copper Ave. NW
 Albuquerque, NM 87102
 505-247-1750

Figure 6
2004 Land Use

Source: MRCOG 2004 Existing Land Use digital data.

uses will continue to grow and expand over the next two decades. It is also likely that agricultural land will continue to decrease with all the rapid demands for growth. Nevertheless, the County should try to protect agricultural land whenever possible, in order to preserve the unique cultural heritage and lifestyle of Valencia County.

Regional Infrastructure Basic infrastructure in Valencia County includes roads, railroads, airports, gas pipelines, electric transmission lines, water and sewer lines, and telecommunications. A map of Utility Infrastructure (Figure 7) shows electric transmission lines, gas pipelines, cell towers, and major roads in Valencia County. The major road network is discussed in more detail elsewhere in this Plan, but it should be noted that a major interstate highway (I-25) will play a significant role in future development in the County.

Most of the electricity used in Valencia County is produced at the San Juan Generating Station in the Four Corners region of New Mexico and then transmitted to the County by three high-voltage transmission lines. The El Paso Electric line is rated to carry 345,000 volts (345 kilovolts [kV]). The Plains Electric line and the PNM line are rated to carry 115,000 volts (115 kilovolts [kV]). Valencia County is also served by three gas pipelines: The El Paso Natural Gas line, the Transwestern line, and the Chevron line. There are 13 cell towers scattered throughout the County, with all of them located along the Rio Grande corridor and the major population centers in the County.

The railroads stretch from the far southeast corner of the County to the far northwest corner, passing through Laguna Pueblo and Trust Lands. The railroad tracks split in Belen with one track heading north and paralleling the Rio Grande, and the other going northwest and then splitting again south of NM Highway 6. The existing railroad tracks have made it possible to initiate the proposed new commuter rail from Belen to the North, eventually to Santa Fe.

Demographic Information

Demographic information is provided for population, housing, and employment. The information was gathered from the 2000 Census and the New Mexico Department of Labor. The historical Census data helps to portray the rate of growth in Valencia County, and also describes where that growth has taken place. Future projections of population, housing, and employment can be found in Chapter 3: Trends and Projections.

Population and Housing Data Valencia County is one of the faster growing counties in the Middle Rio Grande region. In 2000, the population for Valencia County totaled 66,152, the number of housing units was 16,024, and the number of jobs neared 15,000. Table 3 below lists the population, housing units, and employment for the County, its municipalities, and the two Indian Reservations in the year 2000.

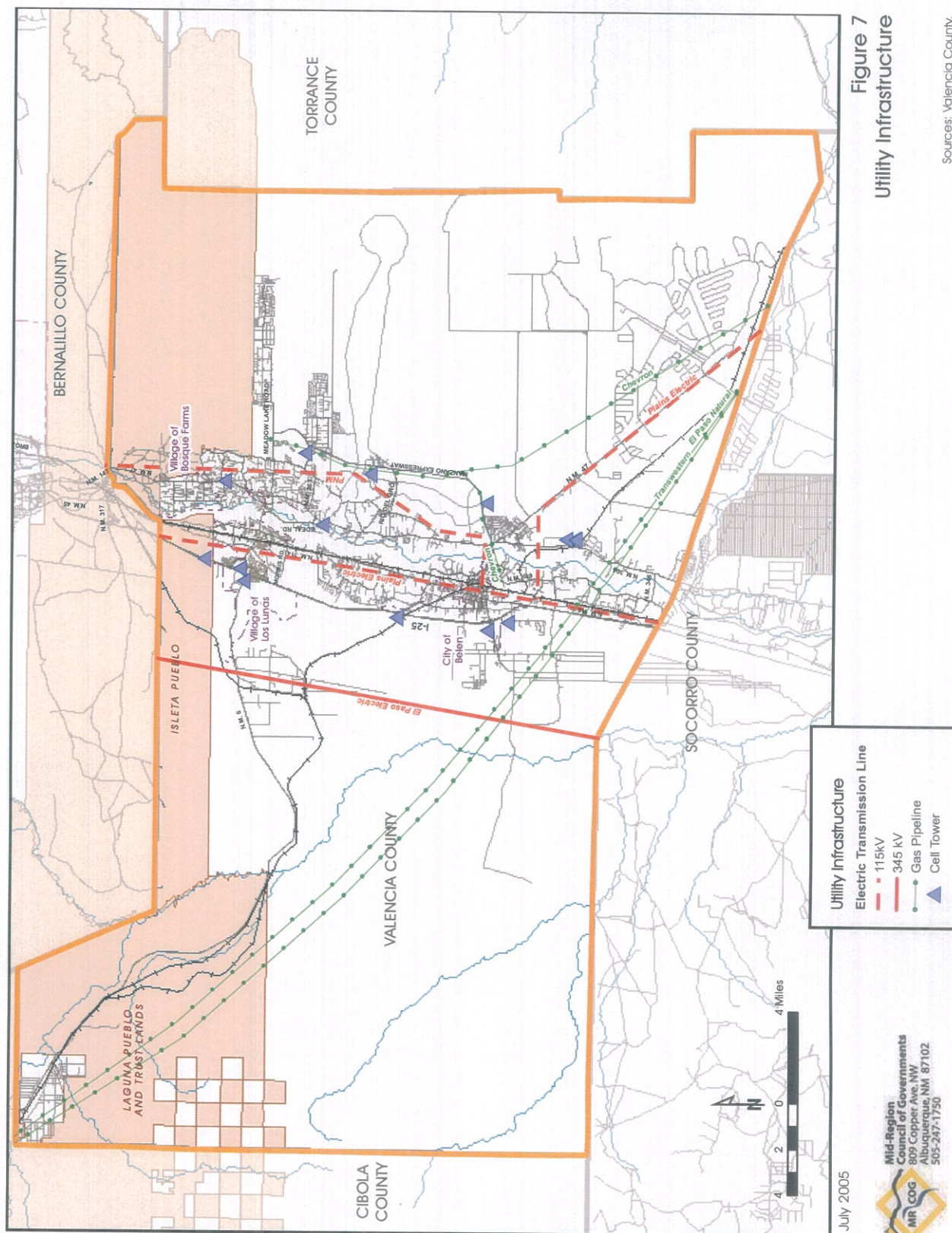


Table 3
2000 Population and Housing

	Population	Housing Units	Employment
Valencia County	66,152	24,643	14,829
Belen	6,901	2,952	4,152
Bosque Farms	3,931	1,476	800
Los Lunas	10,034	3,845	4,769
Isleta Pueblo	965	341	178
Laguna Pueblo	10	5	-
Unincorporated Valencia County	44,311	16,024	4,930

*Isleta and Laguna only include the portions in Valencia County.

*Employment includes self-employment and unpaid family workers.

Source: 2000 Census

Table 4 displays the population of Valencia County and incorporated municipalities in the County since 1960. The County has grown at a steady rate since 1960, growing by almost 50% during each decade (see Figure 8). Within the County, the Village of Los Lunas and the unincorporated areas of the County have grown the fastest, while Belen has experienced more modest increases in population. Bosque Farms more than doubled its population during the 1970s, and has since maintained slow growth due mainly to limited available land within the municipal corporate limits.

Table 4
**Historical Population in Valencia County
and Incorporated Municipalities**

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Valencia County	*16,146	*20,451	*30,769	45,235	66,152
Los Lunas	1,186	973	3,525	6,013	10,034
Belen	5,031	4,823	5,617	6,547	6,901
Bosque Farms	-	1,699	3,353	3,791	3,931

Valencia County was split into two counties in 1981. Populations for 1960 to 1980 are computed from Census data for the Los Lunas and Belen Census Divisions which approximate the current boundaries of Valencia County.

Source: 2000 Census

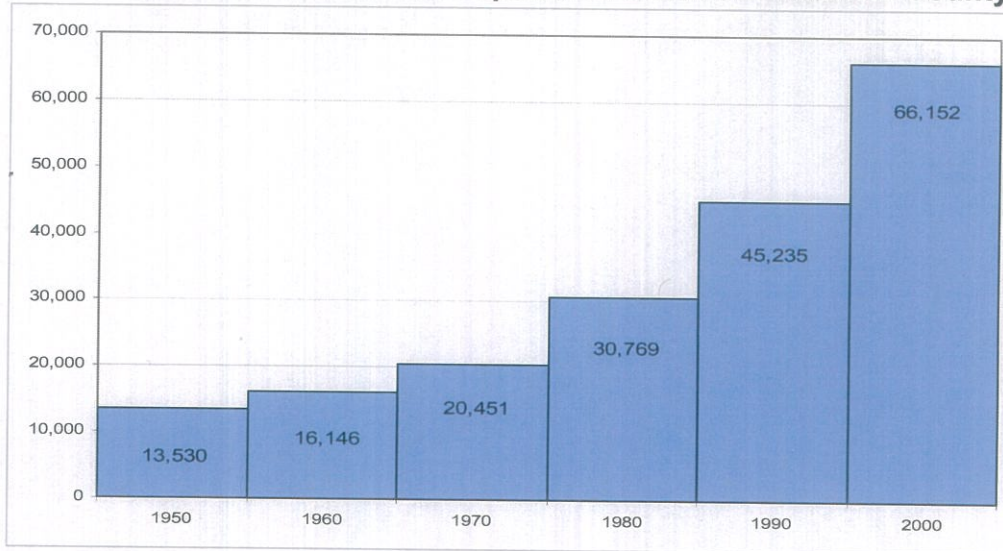


Old Mill in Jarales



Arch Sculpture near Tomé Hill

Figure 8
1960 to 2000 Historical Population Growth in Valencia County

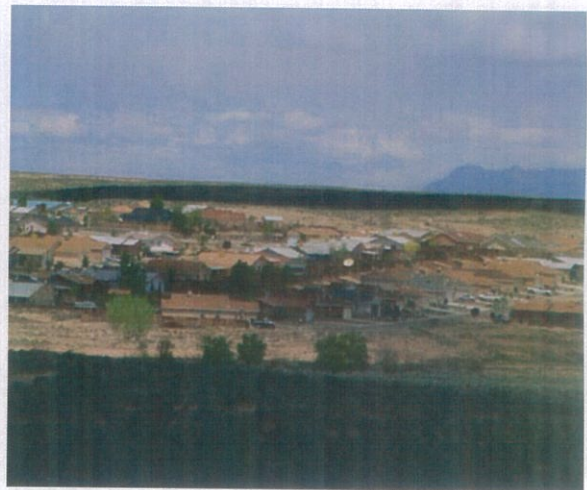


Source: 2000 Census

The population for designated statistical areas in the County is provided in Figure 9. While the incorporated communities of Los Lunas, Belen, and Bosque Farms make up a considerable portion (31.5%) of the population in Valencia County, the unincorporated areas make up an even larger share of the County population (68.5%). The community of Los Chaves has the largest population (5,033) among unincorporated communities, while Casa Colorada has the least (56). The category "Outside of Place" in Figure 9 has the most population with 15,884. Population shown in this category would include the portions of Isleta and Laguna Pueblos in Valencia County and those not living in any Census specified community (such as Highland Meadows).



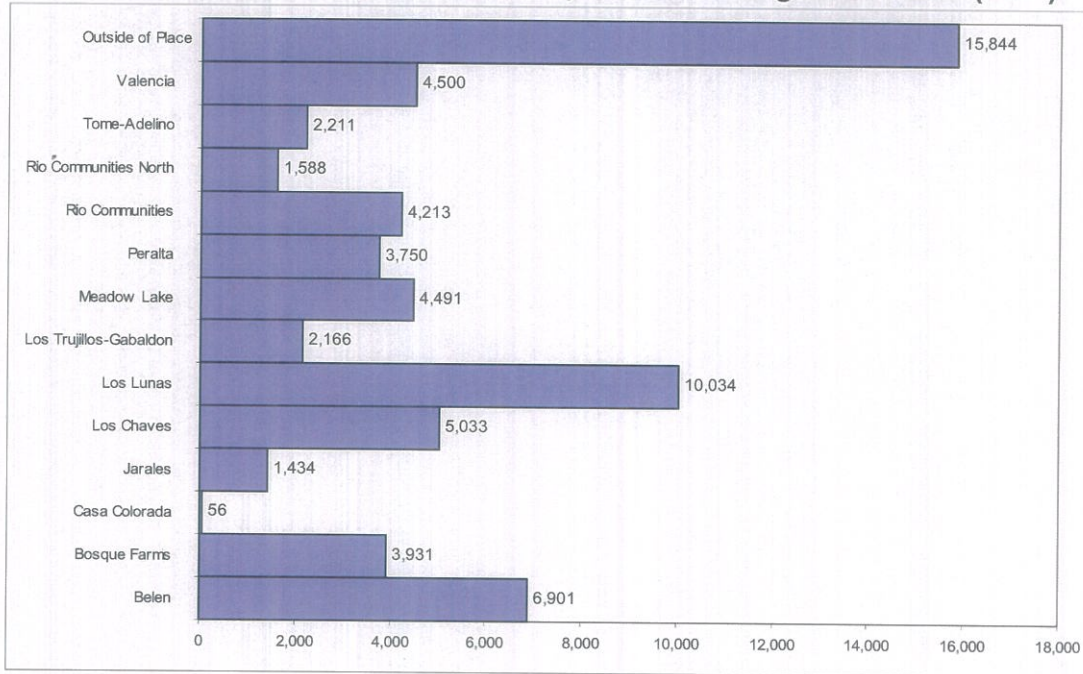
Habitat for Humanity in Valencia County



Los Pasitos del Cielo

Figure 9

2000 Valencia County Population by Census Designated Place (CDP)



Source: 2000 Census

*Highland Meadows was not designated as a Census place in 2000 and therefore is not included in the figure above.

Valencia County has an ethnically diverse population. More than fifty percent of Valencia County residents identified themselves as Hispanic in 2000 (see Table 5). "Hispanic" is a complex designation, because it describes an ethnicity rather than a race. Therefore, someone can identify their race as white while identifying their ethnicity to be Hispanic. The 2000 Census reveals that the percentage of persons of Hispanic Origin in Valencia County (55.0) was higher than the percentage for the State of New Mexico (42.1), and significantly higher than the national average (12.5). Conversely, Valencia County has a smaller percentage of white, non-Hispanic persons than the State and the Nation.

Table 5
2000 Race and Ethnicity

	Valencia County	New Mexico	United States
Hispanic	55.0%	42.1%	12.5%
White	39.4%	44.7%	69.1%
Black	1.1%	1.7%	12.1%
American Indian	2.6%	8.9%	0.7%
Asian, Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0.3%	1.1%	3.7%
Other, 2 or more races	1.6%	1.6%	1.8%
Total Population	66,152	1,819,046	281,421,906

Source: 2000 Census

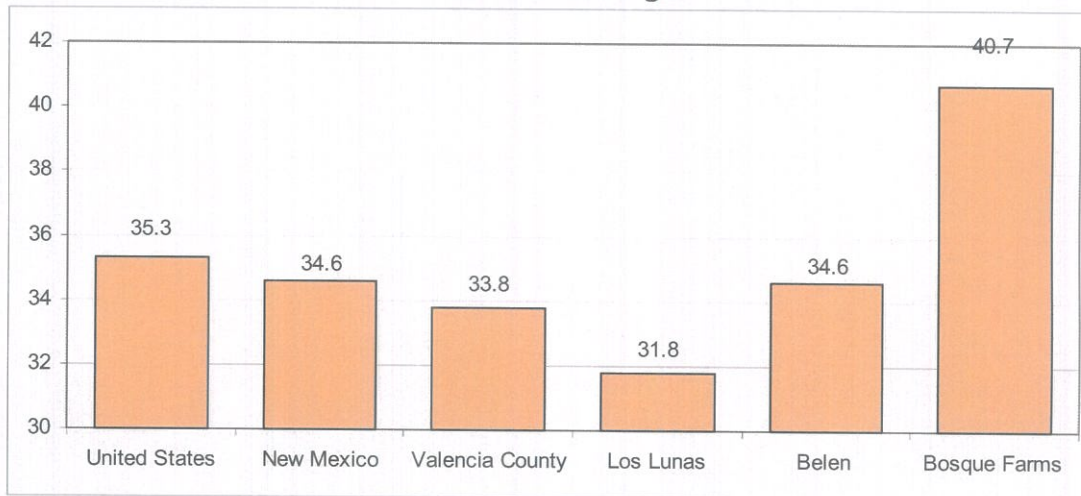
The age distribution of Valencia County residents closely resembles that of the State, as shown in Table 6. Valencia County has a comparatively young population, as its median age (33.8) is slightly lower than both the State (34.6) and the national (35.3) median age. However, there is diversity in the age distribution within Valencia County (see Figure 10). For example, the median age in Bosque Farms is 40.7, while the median age of Los Lunas is 31.8. The Valencia County population has continued to age over the past 3 decades. In 1970 the median age in Valencia County was 21.6, in 1980 it was 25.5, in 1990 it was 31.5, and in 2000 it was 33.8. This echoes a national trend that is primarily due to the aging of the baby boomers and longer life spans.

Table 6
Valencia County and New Mexico:
2000 Age Distribution

Age Group	Valencia County		New Mexico	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
< 20	21,745	32.9	564,859	31.0
20-24	3,719	5.6	121,291	6.7
25-44	19,598	29.6	516,100	28.4
45-64	14,367	21.7	404,571	22.2
65-over	6,723	10.2	212,225	11.7
Totals	66,152	100.0	1,819,046	100.0

Source: 2000 Census

Figure 10
2000 Median Age



Source: 2000 Census

The education level of Valencia County residents is generally lower than the State and surrounding counties. As illustrated in Table 7, Valencia County has a lower percentage of both high school and college graduates than Bernalillo and Sandoval Counties, the State, and the Nation. The irony of this statistic is that Valencia County is home to a branch campus of the University of New Mexico (UNM-Valencia Campus). Nevertheless, this situation presents a great

potential for locally higher education levels, and is a relatively new and growing branch campus of the university system which adds to the amenities for attracting and maintaining quality development in the County.

Table 7
2000 Education Level for Persons Age 25 and Over in Valencia
County, Surrounding Counties, New Mexico and U.S. (in percentages)

	Valencia County	Torrance County	Bernalillo County	Sandoval County	New Mexico	U.S.
High School Graduate	76.1	77.1	84.4	86.0	78.8	80.3
College Graduate	14.8	14.5	30.5	24.8	23.4	24.4
Total Persons	40,917	10,556	358,680	56,479	1,134,801	182,211,639

Source: 2000 Census

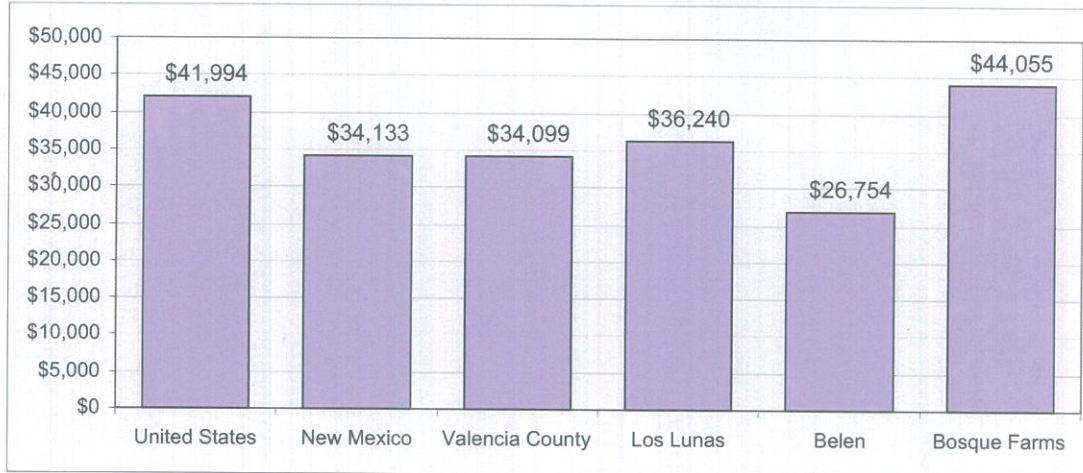
A distribution of 1999 household income is provided in Table 8, and median household income is shown in Figure 11. The median household income in Valencia County is similar to the State, but lower than the national average. Inside Valencia County, both Bosque Farms and Los Lunas have a higher median household income than the County as a whole, while Belen and many of the unincorporated areas have incomes that are significantly lower. In Valencia County, 16.8 percent of the population was found to be below the poverty level (Figure 12). This is lower than the percentage of persons living below poverty level in the State (18.4), but higher than the national average (12.4). Poverty levels are greater for those living in Belen, but less prevalent in Bosque Farms and Los Lunas.

Table 8
1999 Household Income in Valencia County, New Mexico, and U.S.

Category	Valencia County		New Mexico	U.S.
	Number	Percent	Percent	Percent
Less than \$10,000	2,224	9.8	12.5	5.8
\$10,000 to \$14,999	1,981	8.8	8.4	4.3
\$15,000 to \$24,999	3,859	17.0	15.8	10.7
\$25,000 to \$34,999	3,527	15.5	14.4	12.0
\$35,000 to \$49,999	4,323	19.0	17.0	17.1
\$50,000 to \$74,999	3,895	17.1	16.5	22.3
\$75,000 to \$99,999	1,864	8.2	7.8	12.5
\$100,000 to \$149,999	730	3.2	5.0	9.6
\$150,000 to \$199,999	174	0.8	1.3	2.8
\$200,000 or more	127	0.6	1.3	2.9
Total Households	22,714	100.0	100.0	100.0

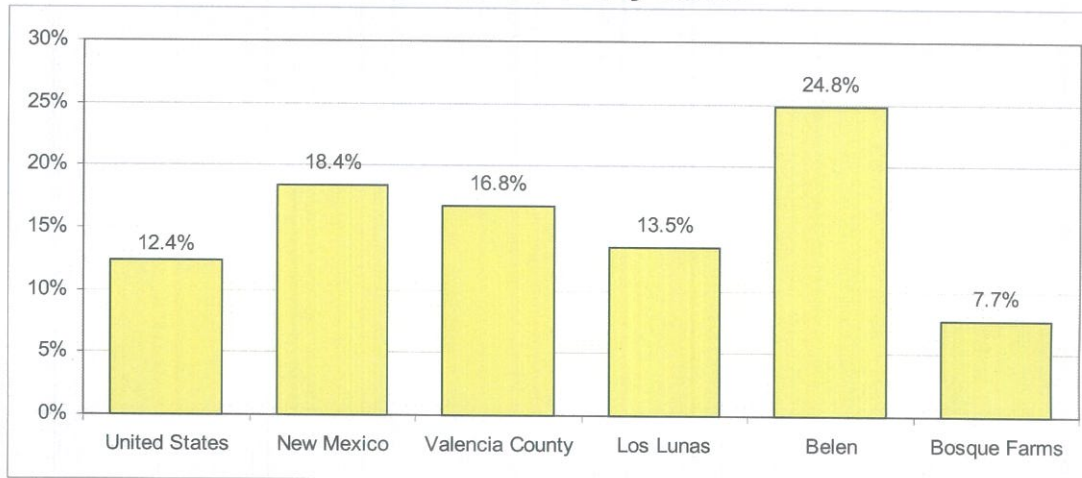
Source: 2000 Census

Figure 11
1999 Median Household Income



Source: 2000 Census

Figure 12
1999 Below Poverty Status



Source: 2000 Census

Fifty-seven percent of the housing stock in Valencia County in 2000 consisted of single family residences in conventional housing. However, this percentage of single family housing units has decreased over the past decade, whereas the percentage of mobile homes has increased (see Table 9). While the percentage of mobile homes in Valencia County only increased from 33.3 percent in 1990 to 34.5 percent in 2000, the actual number increased from 5,593 units in 1990 to 8,516 units in 2000 (an increase of 52 percent). The percentage of mobile homes in Valencia County in 2000 was nearly double that of the State and almost five times that of the national average (see Table 10). Multi-family units in Valencia County are a much smaller part of the housing stock than in the State or the Nation.

The Census questionnaire does not differentiate between mobile homes and manufactured housing (typically a double-wide mobile home). Householders who lived in manufactured housing could have selected either a "mobile home" or a "single-family house" to describe their home. Therefore, the percentage of mobile homes and manufactured housing combined is greater than what the Census statistics shows for mobile homes. While mobile homes and manufactured housing provide a legitimate and acceptable alternative to conventional site-built housing, they tend to deteriorate more rapidly than site-built housing, lowering the assessed valuation of property and detracting from the appearance of the surrounding community.

Table 9
1990 and 2000 Housing Type in Valencia County

Type	1990 Number of Units	2000 Number of Units	1990 Percent	2000 Percent
Single Family	9,750	14,040	58.1	57.0
Multifamily	1,438	2,087	8.6	8.5
Mobile Homes	5,593	8,516	33.3	34.5
Total	16,781	24,643	100.0	100.0

Source: 2000 Census

Table 10
2000 Housing Type in Valencia County, New Mexico, and U.S.

	Valencia County	New Mexico	United States
Single Family	57.0	61.0	60.3
Multifamily	8.5	20.4	32.1
Mobile Homes	34.5	18.6	7.6

Source: 2000 Census

The age of occupied housing in Valencia County is reported in Table 11. Nearly 80 percent (79.6%) of the housing units in Valencia County were constructed after 1970. The 1990s were the most active decade for housing construction in Valencia County, when over a third of its total housing (8,505 units) was built.

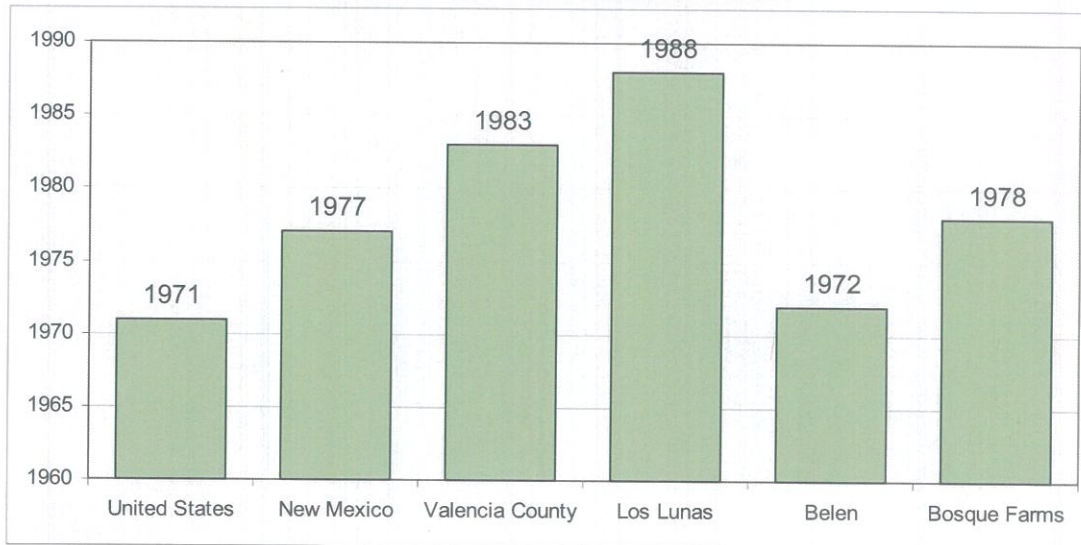
Table 11
2000 Age of Occupied Housing in Valencia County

Year Structure Built	Number of Units	Percent of Housing Stock
Total:	24,643	100.0
1999 to March 2000	894	3.6
1995 to 1998	4,594	18.6
1990 to 1994	3,017	12.2
1980 to 1989	5,554	22.2
1970 to 1979	5,568	22.6
1960 to 1969	2,370	9.6
1950 to 1959	1,152	4.7
1940 to 1949	544	2.2
1939 or earlier	950	3.9

Source: 2000 Census

Figure 13 shows the median year in which structures were built in Valencia County. This Figure reveals that housing in Valencia County is relatively new when compared to the State and National averages. While the median year a structure was built in Belen (1972) and Bosque Farms (1978) is older than the County average (1983), the median year a structure was built in the Village of Los Lunas is significantly younger (1988). Much of the growth in Valencia County over the past two decades has taken place in Los Lunas.

Figure 13
2000 Median Year Structure Built



Source: 2000 Census

Employment Data The largest employment sector in Valencia County is Government; accounting for almost one out of every three jobs in the County (see Table 12). The Retail (23%) and Service (15%) sectors also make up a large percentage of the jobs in Valencia County.

Table 12
2000 Employment in Valencia County

Employment Sector	Number of Jobs	Percent of Jobs
Agriculture	309	2.1%
Construction	954	6.4%
Manufacturing	1,434	9.7%
TCU	1,107	7.5%
Wholesale	264	1.8%
Retail	3,482	23.5%
Fire	474	3.2%
Service	2,220	15.0%
Government	4,585	30.9%
Military	-	0.0%
Total	14,829	100.0%

Source: NM Department of Labor

Journey to Work Data Commuting characteristics for Valencia County's working population are presented in Tables 13 through 15. The majority of Valencia County's workers commute to jobs outside of the County; in fact, more than half (53.3%) work in a different county. The majority of those commuters work in Bernalillo County (48.7%), which has increased since 1990 (46.9%). The percentage increase may seem small; however, by 2000 the number of residents traveling from Valencia County to Bernalillo County increased by almost 5,000 people. Work destinations for Valencia County residents also increased to other counties besides Bernalillo, predominantly Sandoval, Santa Fe, and Torrance Counties.

Table 13
Place of Work – County Level

	New Mexico	Albuquerque MSA	Valencia County	Belen	Bosque Farms	Los Lunas
Total Workers 16 years and over	759,177	326,775	26,696	2,511	1,689	4,404
Worked in county of residence	84.6%	83.2%	46.1%	71.6%	32.2%	45.9%
Worked outside county of residence	12.1%	16.0%	53.3%	28.3%	66.4%	53.2%

Source: 2000 Census

Table 14 shows that although nearly 50 percent of Valencia County's residents leave the County for work, 81 percent of the jobs within the County are held by its residents. These tables also indicate that there has been an increasing number of commuters leaving the County to work between 1990 and the year 2000. The total numbers of reported work origins and destinations used as a basis for the percentages are displayed in Table 15.

Table 14
1990 and 2000 Work Destinations for
Valencia County Residents (in percentages)

	Bernalillo	Sandoval	Santa Fe	Torrance	Valencia	Other
1990						
Work Destinations for VC residents	46.9	0.8	0.5	0.1	49.2	2.5
Resident Origins for VC workers	8.7	1.1	0.1	0.4	82.6	7.0
2000						
Work Destinations for VC residents	48.7	1.9	0.7	0.1	46.1	2.5
Resident Origins for VC workers	12.0	0.9	0.3	0.5	81.3	5.0

Source: 2000 Census

Table 15
1990 and 2000 Work Destinations for
Valencia County Residents (total number)

	Bernalillo	Sandoval	Santa Fe	Torrance	Valencia	Other
1990						
Work Destinations for VC residents	8,156	133	89	16	8,539	440
Resident Origins for VC workers	900	117	14	37	8,539	727
2000						
Work Destinations for VC residents	12,996	502	199	30	12,302	667
Resident Origins for VC workers	1,817	138	45	80	12,302	750

Source: 2000 Census

Statistics for means of transportation and travel time to work are found in Tables 16 and 17. According to the 2000 Census, over 80 percent of Valencia County workers drive alone to work, while 17 percent carpooled to work. The Census also revealed that over half of Valencia County's workers have commutes lasting more than 30 minutes, reflecting the high percentage of commuter travel to jobs outside of the County. Average travel time for County workers has increased from 26.5 minutes in 1990 to 30.7 minutes in 2000. Continued growth and traffic congestion may increase these times in the future.

Table 16
2000 Commuting to Work (in percentages)

	New Mexico	Valencia County	Belen	Bosque Farms	Los Lunas
Drove alone	79.1	80.4	82.4	77.9	81.0
Carpooled	15.5	17.1	16.0	19.8	15.9
Public transportation	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.0
Bicycle	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Walked	2.9	1.4	0.5	0.3	2.9
Other means	1.1	0.8	0.9	1.8	0.3
Drove alone	79.1	80.4	82.4	77.9	81.0

Source: 2000 Census

Table 17
2000 Travel Time to Work (in percentages)

	New Mexico	Valencia County	Belen	Bosque Farms	Los Lunas
Under 10 minutes	18.5	11.2	29.7	8.6	16.4
10 to 19 minutes	33.7	20.2	27.3	12.1	21.0
20 to 29 minutes	18.5	13.5	9.4	22.1	16.8
30 to 59 minutes	19.9	43.3	26.5	45.3	38.1
60 minutes or more	5.2	7.9	4.2	4.6	4.7
Worked at home	4.2	3.9	2.9	7.2	3.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: 2000 Census

Inventory of County Facilities and Services

It is important in the comprehensive planning process to understand the level of public services that are available to the public. It is also important to ascertain any major deficiencies in current public services and facilities. This segment of the community profile identifies those facilities and services being provided to Valencia County residents.

County Administration The County is delegated its power and authority from the State of New Mexico and has a responsibility to provide a range of governmental services to the unincorporated areas of the County, which are all lands that are not located within municipal, state, federal, or tribal jurisdiction. The County can provide leadership in areas such as law enforcement, fire protection, health care, economic development, land use regulations, and other such services. Valencia County is classified as a "Class B Over County" by the New Mexico Legislature. All of the counties in New Mexico are classified based upon population and the total assessed valuation of property in the county. The primary purpose of county classification is to establish an equitable salary schedule for elected county officials and to determine county budget requirements and limitations.

Valencia County has 10 elective positions: the five County Commissioners, County Clerk, County Treasurer, County Assessor, County Sheriff, and the Probate Judge. These elected officials each serve 4 year terms. For purposes of conducting the business of the County, the County's current structure of administrative Managers, Directors, and Department Heads include the following: County Manager, County Assessor, County Clerk, County Sheriff, County Treasurer, Probate Judge, Administrative Services Director/Business Manager, Indigent Insurance Administrator, Animal Control Director, Older American Director, Road Superintendent, IT Manager, Human Resource Manager, Adult Detention Administrator, Public Works Director, and Code Enforcement Director.

There are also several appointed boards, commissions, and committees: Planning and Zoning Commission, Emergency Medical Services Board, Indigent Board, Tierra Bonita, Trash Committee, Judicial Complex Committee, Heavy Industrial Committee, Animal Control Advisory Board, Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, Water Resources Board, Regional Planning Authority, Transportation Steering Committee, Workforce Investment Board, Multi-Line Risk Management Board, Workman's Comp Board, Accident and Review Committee and the Older American Advisory Council.

Significant County-funded or County-assisted programs include Vector Control, Juvenile Detention, Farm & Range, Cooperative Extension Service, Valencia County Soil and Water Conservation District, and County Public Health.

Commission/Manager

The County Commission is the principal governing body in the County, whose primary duty is to make policy for the safety and well-being of those citizens that reside in the unincorporated areas of the County. Some of the legislative powers of the County Commission include the following: the power to prepare the County budget, levy taxes on property, issue special bonds for special purposes, make appointments to boards and commissions, adopt ordinances, and act as zoning authorities for the County. The County Commission is made up of five Commissioners. The County has been divided into five County Commission districts based on the 1990 Census. Each of the Commissioners is elected to represent the district in which he or she resides.

The County Manager serves as the chief administrative officer of the county, while also serving as a liaison to the elected officials. The County Manager is responsible for carrying out all ordinances, regulations, and resolutions of the Board of County Commissioners, as well as hiring and firing of County employees, overseeing the day-to-day operation of the County government, and advising the Commission on matters of concern.

County Clerk

The County Clerk is the custodian of all permanent records of the County, the administrator of elections, and the clerk of the Probate Court. Some of the Clerk's duties include collecting fees from liquor establishments, recording voter registration, filing transfers of property, and issuing marriage licenses and firework vending permits. The County Clerk must also attend all Commission meetings, keep minutes of their proceedings, and record their votes and actions.

County Treasurer

The County Treasurer mails out property tax notices and bills, and receives payment for property taxes and all other miscellaneous County receipts. The Treasurer is responsible for the safekeeping and investment of all County funds.

County Assessor

The County Assessor is responsible for the valuation or assessment of property in the County. The County Assessor also provides the County government with the information and documentation for the current tax base upon which to assess all tax levies on property.

Probate Judge

The Probate Judge has the responsibility of presiding over cases involving the settlement of wills and estates and conflicts involving their settlement.

Road Maintenance The Road Maintenance Department is in charge of road and sign maintenance, repairing potholes and road surfaces, cutting weeds along the roadways, replacing culverts, and installing guardrails on all roads

dedicated for County maintenance. Roadway maintenance in the unincorporated portions of Valencia County is completed on a response-to-complaints basis. Valencia County currently has 150 miles of paved roads, 54 miles of roads that are chip sealed, and 982.5 miles of dirt roads. Chip sealed roadways, however are not long-term improvements and often lose their surface after two years of use, requiring repaving. The County currently has three road graders and three dump trucks assigned to road maintenance.

Local roads located in the incorporated portions of the County (Belen, Bosque Farms, and Los Lunas) are maintained by their respective municipal road departments. Approximately 161.6 miles of roadways within the municipalities and the County are owned and maintained by the New Mexico Department of Transportation. These include the Federal Interstate system (I-25 including four interchanges) and State highways (e.g., NM 47, NM 6, NM 314, and a number of shorter facilities).



Square Deal Road in Valencia County

Waste Disposal Solid waste collection and disposal in the County is limited and there are no sanitary landfills currently active within the County. The Conejo Transfer Station on the East Mesa is operated by the County for the collection of individual disposal of solid waste including old appliances, furniture, and other household waste. Virtually all solid waste is transported out of the County for disposal at a regulated landfill. The transfer station is open Tuesday through Saturday from 8 am to 4 pm. Waste Management of New Mexico is a company that provides collection services to some County residents. Because of a lack of solid waste facilities, illegal dumping is a major problem in the County.

Law Enforcement Maintaining law and order in Valencia County is a challenging duty because of its extensive area to patrol, widely scattered development, and relatively long distance response. The most problematic law enforcement issues in the County are drugs, burglaries, gangs, and traffic.

Sheriff's Department

The Valencia County Sheriff's Department provides a wide variety of protective services to the residents of the unincorporated County. The Department currently has 28 deputies, two lieutenants, three sergeants, four detectives, one detective sergeant, two court security officers, a civil secretary, a records clerk, an administrative secretary, and seven dispatchers. Operationally,

the Sheriff's Department typically responds to self-reported emergency and non-emergency calls. Deputies have three bases of operation: the main headquarters in Los Lunas, and two substations at El Cerro Mission and Rio Communities. The Sheriff's Department will be stepping up their fight against crime over the next year with new equipment and resources including the following: a crime scene unit, a mobile command center, and a regional dispatch center (which will open when the new County Courthouse is completed).

Judicial System

The judicial system in Valencia County is made up of a magistrate Court, three municipal courts (in each of the municipalities), a district court, a Probate Judge, and a District Attorney. The magistrate court has three judges (two in Los Lunas and one in Belen). The magistrate court hears small civil and criminal cases and can try all misdemeanor cases. The municipal courts (in Belen, Bosque Farms, and Los Lunas) enforce the municipality's criminal ordinances. Valencia, Cibola, and Sandoval Counties are in New Mexico's 13th Judicial District. District courts in New Mexico hear the most serious civil and criminal cases, and have the most wide ranging jurisdiction of any trial court. District courts also hear appeals from the lower courts (magistrate and municipal courts), and can direct the lower courts to revise its practice to conform to the law (Hain, Garcia, and St. Clair, 1994). Valencia County is currently planning to build a new district court to be located within Los Lunas (by law the court must be located in the County seat).

Detention Facility

Valencia County Detention Center was opened in 2000 and was managed by Cornell Corporation until December 31, 2004. Valencia County assumed management of the facility on January 1, 2005. The Valencia County Detention Center has 53 County employees and 160 beds for adult male and female inmates. The Detention Center provides medical, mental health, and food services for all inmates. Inmates may be sentenced to no more than 364 days by the Courts, and may be detained in a pre-trial status for as long as is necessary to complete their trial.

County Fire Districts Fire Protection is provided by the following fire districts: Rio Grande Estates, Tome/Adelino, Valencia/El Cerro, Meadow Lake, Los Chavez, Peralta, Highland Meadows, Jarales/Pueblitos/Bosque, and Manzano Vista. There are two main stations located in Tome/Adelino and Las Maravillas. Also there are two substations: Rio Grande Estates Fire Department at Rio del Oro, and Manzano Vista Fire Department at El Cerro Mission. Each fire district has its own fire protection (ISO) rating. The ISO ratings in Valencia County range from Class 5 (Meadow Lake) to Class 10 (Highland Meadows). The lower the ISO score the better the rating; thus Meadow Lake has significantly better fire protection than Highland Meadows.

A Fire Marshall and two deputies are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a

week. The County Fire Districts have a combined inventory of 72 pieces of rolling equipment. The Fire Marshall's Office and the Volunteer Fire/Rescue Districts are a division of the Code Enforcement Department. Due to the lack of centralized water systems in many areas of the County, most of the residents in the unincorporated area rely on water tanker trucks for fire suppression. Also, few communities possess fire hydrants.

Emergency Response The County has six fire rescue trucks and twenty-five employees (that are made up of EMS, paramedics, EMT's, EMTI's, and First Responders. Although no current data was available on response times, emergency response in rural areas is often compromised by the long distances and dispersed populations.

Land Use Management Land use management in Valencia County is provided by several entities, including the County Commission, County Manager, Planning and Zoning Commission, Planning and Zoning Division (staff), and the Building Inspector's Division (staff). Each plays a specific role in land use management, with the Planning and Zoning Division administering and enforcing the zoning ordinance and subdivision review, and the County Commission having the final authority on most land use development determinations.

Planning and Zoning Administration

The Valencia County Planning and Zoning Commission is made up of five members, one from each Commission District. The Planning and Zoning Commission is appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. The purpose of the County Planning and Zoning Commission is to promote a comprehensive planning process that guides and coordinates harmonious development in the County. The Planning and Zoning Commission conducts public meetings and hearings and submits preliminary written reviews and recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners on zoning actions and proposed subdivision platting or re-platting. The Planning and Zoning Division staff administers and enforces the zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, and promotes the implementation of the comprehensive plan.

Code Enforcement

The Code Enforcement Department in Valencia County is divided into four divisions: Planning and Zoning, Building Inspector, Fire Marshall's Office, and Animal Control. The Building Inspector's Division reviews proposed plans and issues building permits for County residential and commercial buildings, and ensures that buildings meet all necessary codes. This division also issues flood plain certificates for buildings located in designated flood plain areas according to Federal Insurance Rate Maps published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The Building Inspector's Division consists of a Chief Building Inspector, two inspectors, and one secretary. The Animal Control Division is responsible for capture and disposition of stray or lost domestic animals.

Transportation Systems

County Road Network The primary transportation structure in Valencia County is comprised of roads and highways. The County is traversed by an interstate highway (I-25) and several State highways (including NM 6, NM 314, NM 47, NM 304, NM 309, NM 109, and NM 116). These highways form the basic arterial network for the County road system that carries local as well as through traffic, and generally carries the heaviest vehicular traffic flow.

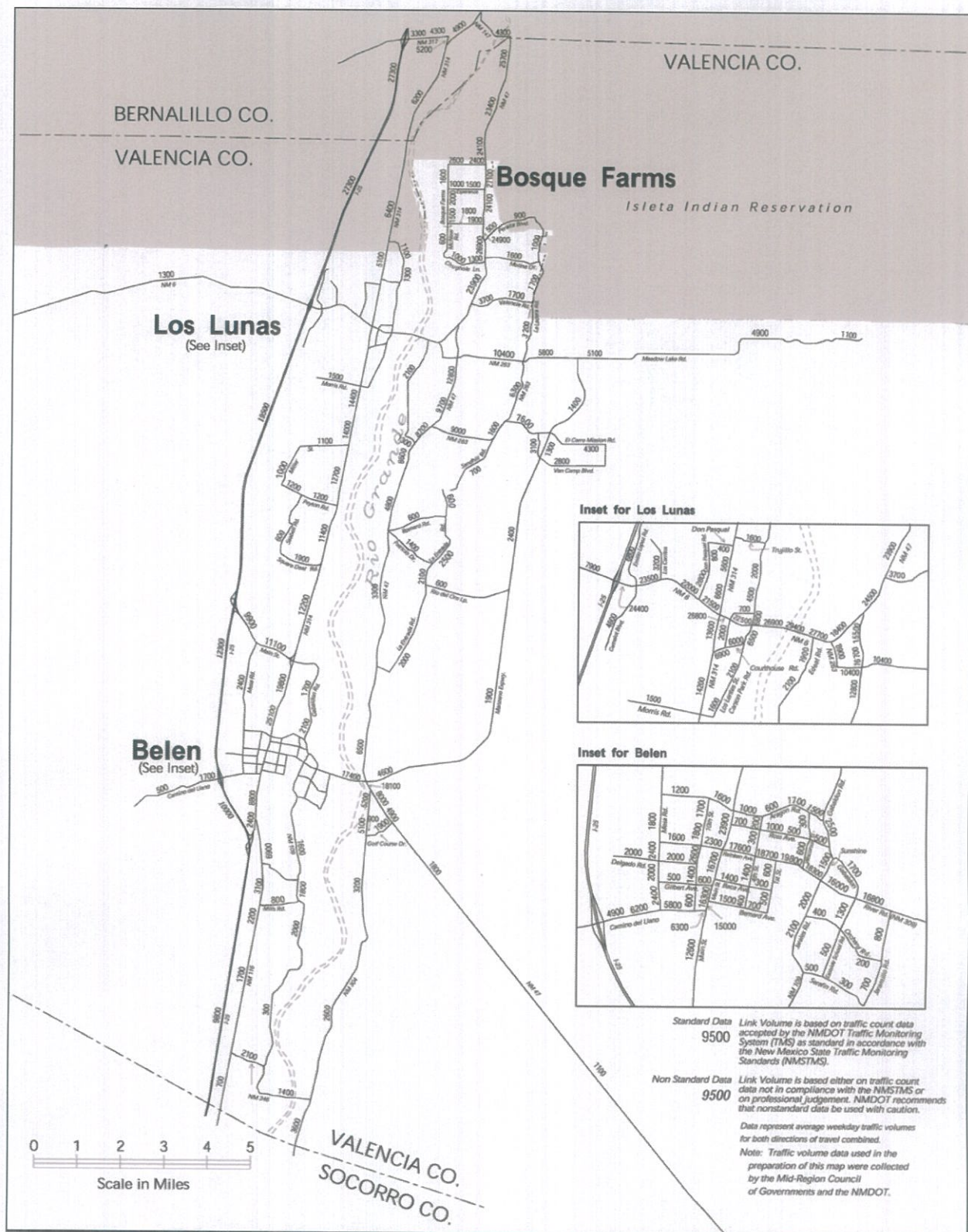
An inventory of traffic counts expressed as average weekday traffic (AWDT) is shown in Figure 14. The AWDT statistics are for the year 2003, representing the number of vehicles passing over a specific point in both directions on a road during a 24-hour period. It is notable that the traffic on NM Highway 47 (a four-lane undivided highway) is greater than the I-25 (four-lane divided) traffic across the Rio Grande. These are the two major north-south travel corridors in the County and are indicative of some of the traffic circulation problems, as most of the commuters travel to jobs north of the County.

The history of traffic counts at these locations over the past decade is shown in Table 18. The obvious finding from this table is that traffic has increased dramatically over the past decade; in some areas, over 100 percent.

Table 18
Average Daily Traffic in Valencia County (1993 -2003)

Location	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003
I-25 North	10300	13700	15400	17800	16300	19300
I-25 South	7000	8400	9800	11000	10400	12100
NM 47 (between Valencia Rd and Chughole Lane)	19100	22900	25900	22700	23400	23400
Meadow Lake Rd (between NM 263 and Manzano Expressway)	3700	4800	5400	6400	5800	6200
NM 263 (between Meadow Lake Rd and El Cerro Mission)	4000	5200	7700	8600	9300	6200
NM 47 (just north of NM 263)	7000	8600	9700	9500	9800	9500
NM 314 (between Peyton Rd and Square Deal Rd)	9200	11500	12800	12700	13100	12800
La Entrada Rd (east of NM 47)	1400	1600	1200	1300	1100	2000
Manzano Expressway (between Rio del Oro Loop and NM 47)	700	800	1600	1600	1600	1900
NM 47 (between NM 304 and Manzano Expressway)	9200	11000	13100	13800	13700	17900
NM 47 (south of Golf Course Dr)	700	1300	1500	1600	1400	1700
NM 304	900	1500	1500	1600	1600	2500

Source: MRCOG



July 2005



**Mid-Region
Council of Governments**
809 Copper Ave. NW
Albuquerque, NM 87102
505-247-1750

Figure 14
2004 Average Weekday
Traffic Volumes

Source: MRCOG.

Related to the traffic flow are the most common accident locations, which are determined by documented reports of traffic accidents. The top ten crash locations in Valencia County are shown in Table 19. NM 47 at the intersection of Wesley Road had the most crashes (643) and injuries (514) over a five year period (1999 – 2003), while Camino del Llano at the I-25 interchange had the most deaths (15). Figure 15 shows a composite map which displays the following information: distribution of the top ten crash locations in the County; the functional classification of roads; and the locations of the worst bridge structures (in terms of their structural integrity or unsafe conditions) as evaluated by the State Department of Transportation. The worst bridge structures as those with a “sufficiency rating” of less than 60, usually meaning they are in need of repair.

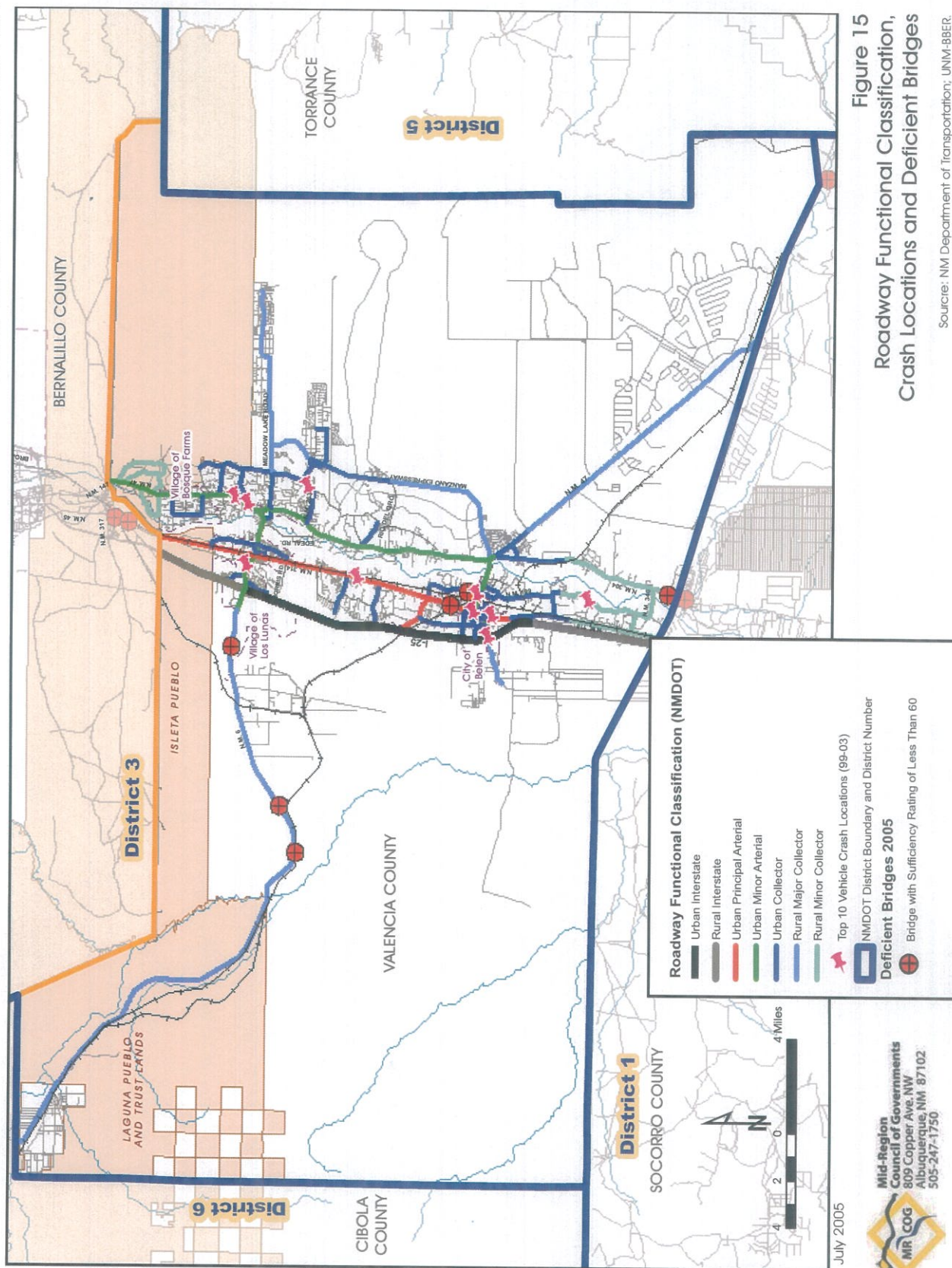
The functional classification of highways shown in Figure 15 defines how specific corridors are being used to serve the travel demands of the community. Functional classification also provides a basis for road design purposes and right-of-way standards necessary for adequate traffic-carrying capacity on a particular road. Functional classification is divided into three categories:

- 1) arterials, which consist of continuous, long-distance travel routes providing regional connections among urban and rural communities, and emphasize a high level of mobility for movement through the region;
- 2) collectors, which provide a linkage between local roads and the arterials; and
- 3) locals, which provide direct access to land use activities, and carry traffic to the higher capacity collectors and arterials.

Table 19
Top Ten Crash Locations in Valencia County (1999 – 2003)

Street	Cross Street	Total Crashes	Killed	Injured
Wesley Rd	NM 47	643	9	514
Rio Grande Rd	NM 6	343	8	217
Torres Dr	Main St (Belen)	316	0	155
Williams Rd	NM 314	201	7	169
Otero Rd	NM 263	155	3	135
Wisconsin St	Reinken Ave	145	0	67
Camino del Llano	I-25	114	15	85
Willow Way	NM 109	87	2	51
Main St	Vaisa Rd	77	1	43
Reinken Ave	NM 314	71	0	18

Source: NMDOT and Division of Government Research, University of New Mexico



Public Transit Operations

All three of the municipalities in Valencia County maintain public transportation programs of some type. The Village of Los Lunas Public Transportation has been operating for three years (the first year door-to-door demand response service was limited to Los Lunas, while the last two years' service included Valencia County). Los Lunas receives funding from Section 5311 and Section 3037 programs through the Transit/Rail section of the New Mexico Department of Transportation to operate four 15-passenger vans (Section 5311), two of which are lift-equipped for elderly and handicapped passengers, and four 15-passenger vans (Section 3037) for employment, counseling,

medical, and day-care transit services. Section 5311 provides funding for public transportation in non-urbanized (rural) areas, while Section 3037 provides funding for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Job Access Reverse Commute (TANF/JARC).



Los Lunas Public Transportation Vehicles

The City of Belen receives Section 5311 funding for the Retired Seniors Volunteer Program (RSVP) to operate a 9-passenger lift-equipped van. RSVP provides demand response service to the general public in the greater Belen area (a 3-mile radius surrounding Belen) and Rio Communities, with occasional service to Albuquerque for special events.

The Village of Bosque Farms is starting a Section 5310 program to provide public transportation service for elderly and disabled persons residing in the Village. Funding for this program was recently awarded to the Village, which will begin operations sometime in 2005.

Adelante (a non-profit corporation providing non-medical transportation services to people with severe disabilities attending programs for vocational, community living, and training and support) receives Section 5310 funding for transportation services in Valencia, Bernalillo and Sandoval counties.

Valencia Counseling Services has two 13-passenger handicapped accessible vehicles for transporting the mentally ill in Valencia County. There is no cost to those that qualify for this demand response system that travels throughout Valencia County and occasionally to Albuquerque.

Scheduled intercity bus service is provided by TNM&O with a stop in the City of Belen. TNM&O travels throughout the Southwestern U.S., serving many

cities in New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Kansas, providing connections to Greyhound and many other nation-wide carriers.

Railroad traffic through Valencia County is primarily used to haul goods, such as general merchandise, grain and food products, chemicals, motor vehicles, and minerals. Amtrak passenger service travels through but does not stop in the County.

A commuter rail service (Rail Runner) is expected to begin service by the end of 2005. This service will run from Belen to Bernalillo with several stops in between including stations in Los Lunas and Belen. Rail Runner will greatly benefit Valencia County, where a greater percentage (48.7) of County residents travel to Bernalillo County to go to work than stay to work in Valencia County (46.1). The Los Lunas commuter rail stop will also have a multi-modal facility that will be a depot for buses, vans, rail, and will contain Village transportation offices. Figure 16 displays a map showing Transit and Intermodal Facilities, including the commuter rail route and stations in Valencia County, as well as intercity bus stations, airports in the County, and Los Lunas public transit routes.



New Mexico Rail Runner Passenger Car

Bikeways and Trails Bicycling and walking are becoming increasingly important throughout Valencia County. Three separate bicycle-pedestrian trails that are intended to eventually connect with each other are currently being designed and built in the eastern portion of the County. When completed, the Rio del Oro Trail will be approximately ten miles long, and will connect much of the east mesa by linking the UNM Valencia campus, Tome Elementary School, and Manzano Vistas. The Rio Communities Core Link will be approximately six miles long, will provide a linkage to the Rio del Oro Trail, and will connect the Manzano Expressway with NM 47 and parts of Rio Communities. The Greenways Trail will intersect with the Rio Del Oro Trail, and will be approximately 15 miles long. See Figure 17 to view the proposed and existing bicycle paths in Valencia County.

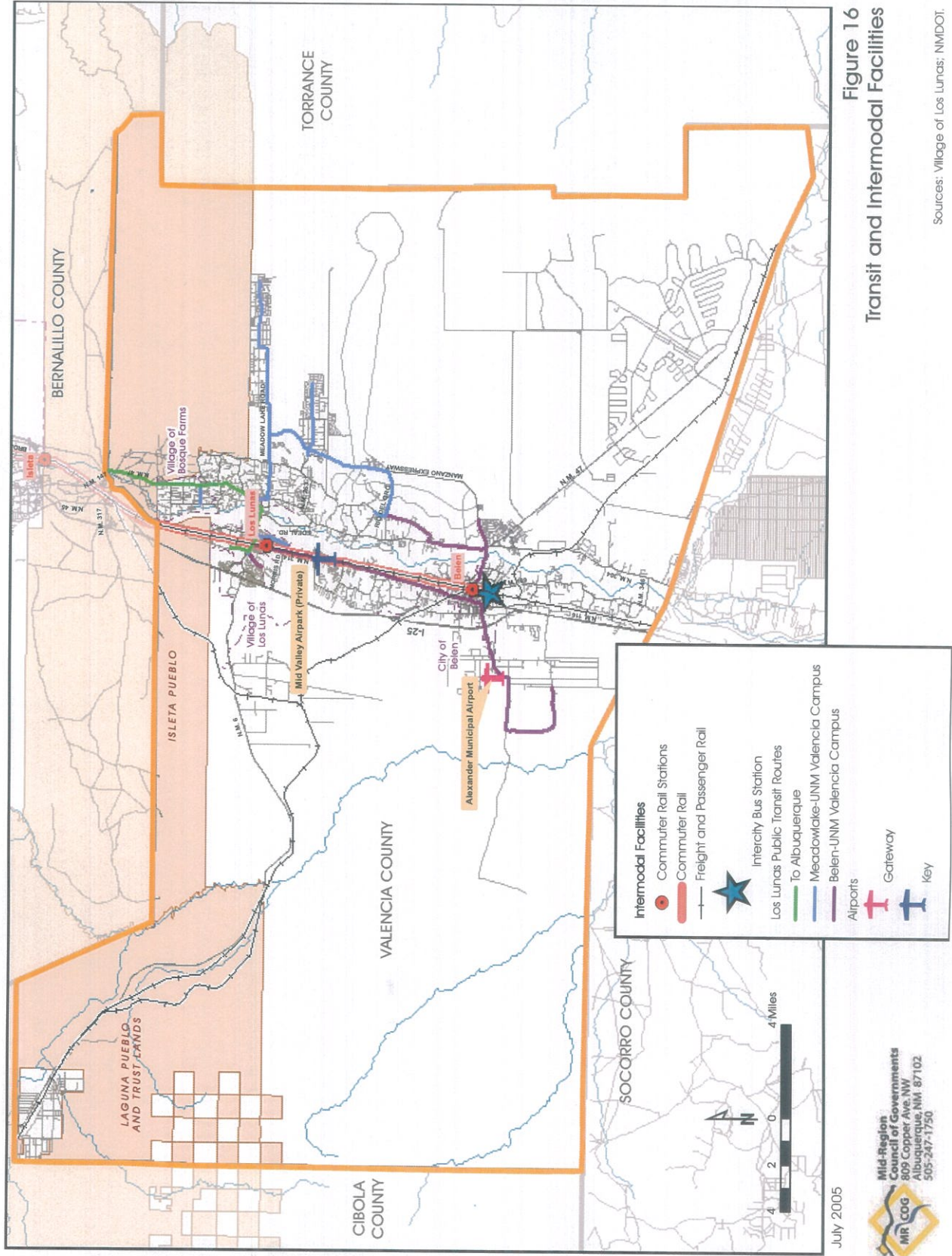
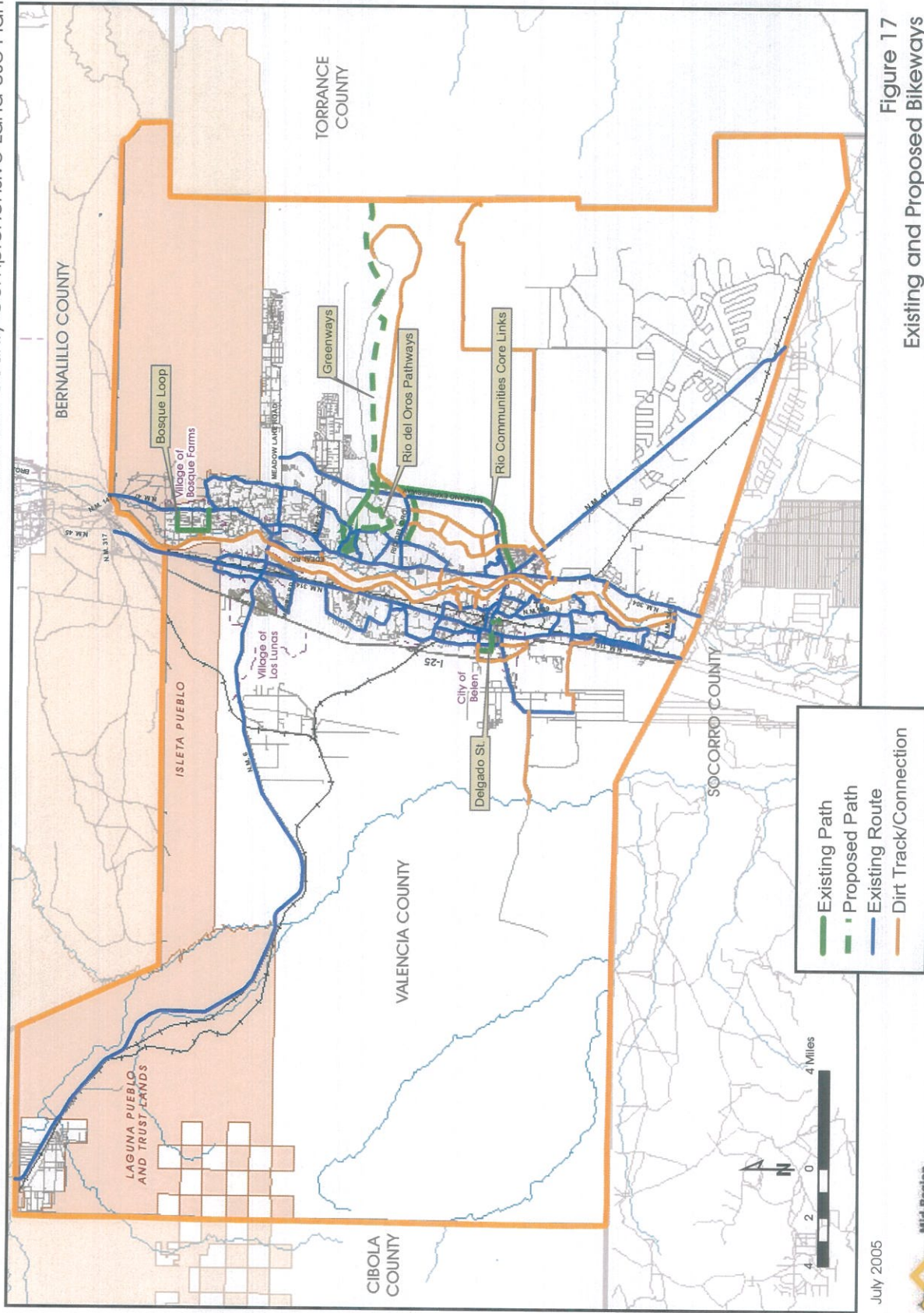


Figure 16
Transit and Intermodal Facilities



July 2005



Figure 17
Existing and Proposed Bikeways
(From Working Draft-Valencia County Mobility Plan)

Sources: MR COG.

The City of Belen and the Village of Bosque Farms are also in the process of constructing bicycle/pedestrian trails. The Bosque Loop Trail in Bosque Farms was recently completed in 2004. The Loop Trail is 3.1 miles long, parallels the Bosque Loop road, and provides connections to the business district, elementary school, Village offices, library, parks, recreation complexes, and local neighborhoods. In the City of Belen, the Delgado Street Trail is being built in phases. Phase I will run parallel to the Belen Highline Canal from the Multipurpose Recreational Park to the Belen High School entrance; and will connect to the one-mile jogging/walking trail already in the Park. The trail will then continue east along Delgado Street to Mesa Road. Phase II will continue east along Delgado Street, beginning at Mesa Road and ending at Tenth Street. Phases I and II are scheduled to be finished in late 2005. Future phases of the Delgado Street Trail may eventually connect to Main Street, the west side, and other parts of the City. With the exception of the Greenways Trail, all of these bicycle/pedestrian trails are being built with federal funding assistance.

A popular bicycle/pedestrian trail in Bernalillo County, known as the Bosque Trail, may soon extend into Valencia County. A plan is currently underway to build future extensions or portions of the Bosque Trail through Valencia County. Initially, the Bosque Trail will most likely be built close to municipalities (Belen, Bosque Farms, and Los Lunas); however, the long range goal is to have a continuous bicycle/pedestrian trail along the Rio Grande Bosque that connects Belen to Bernalillo.



Bosque Trail in Bernalillo County

For planning and design purposes, there are three different types of bikeway facilities. A bicycle route shares the lane of traffic with the car; there is no separation between the car and the bicycle. A bicycle lane offers the benefit of having an exclusive area only to be used by the bicyclist. Cars may not drive in a bicycle lane, but may park in the lane or enter the lane to make a turn. A bicycle trail is a separated path (can be paved or non-paved) that is exclusively used by bicycles, pedestrians, and sometimes equestrians. The Rio Abajo Bicycling Alliance is a local bicycling group in Valencia County that promotes bicycle riding and plans rides on routes, lanes, trails, and off-road trails throughout the County and the State.

Aviation The low population densities and large distances between communities throughout New Mexico make aviation a vital link to both the State's and County's transportation system. Innovations in the aviation industry (i.e., small business jets for travel off the main commercial routes) are making small airports more viable than they have been in the past.

Valencia County has two airports, the publically-owned Alexander Municipal Airport in Belen and the private Mid Valley Airpark near Los Lunas, which could capitalize on this development (see Figure 16). Alexander Municipal Airport is classified by the State of New Mexico as a "Gateway" airport. Gateway airports provide business access for general aviation and induce economic development to a community. Mid Valley Airport is classified by the State as a "Key" airport. Key airports provide access to areas that do not have sufficient activity to justify a Gateway facility. Both Gateway and Key airports are general aviation, basic utility airports designed to accommodate small aircraft (most single and many twin-engine aircraft).



Alexander Municipal Airport in Belen

The New Mexico Aviation Division Five-Year Capital Improvement Program (2000-2004) identifies the following capital improvements and maintenance projects needed at both of these airports:

Alexander Municipal Airport, Belen - Construct a crosswind runway and parallel taxiway with Medium Intensity Runway Lighting (MIRL); Widen parallel taxiway from 30' to 40'; Acquire additional land; Install lighted runway/taxiway signs and retro reflective markers; Install visual approach aids; Preserve and maintain existing pavement; Improve hangar area, install security (chain link fencing), supplemental wind cones; Construct snow removal equipment building; and acquire snow removal equipment.

Mid Valley Airpark, Los Lunas - Airport association is exploring options to become a public entity to enable State to allocate funds to airport; preserve and maintain existing pavement.

Natural Resources

Valencia County has valuable natural resources that should be protected from degradation or preserved for future generations. Among the most notable are fertile and productive farmlands, clean water, and clear air. These natural resources are threatened by urbanizing growth and development, which can result in the contamination of ground and surface water, permanent loss of prime and unique farmlands, and unhealthy levels of air pollution due to increasing emissions from municipal, industrial, and vehicular sources. Valencia County can help to preserve these resources by managing and controlling the intensity of development near productive farmland and those areas which are vulnerable to ground water contamination. The County can preserve water resources by developing water conservation programs and promoting water efficient facilities.

Land and Minerals Many unique geological and ecological features can be found in Valencia County. The Manzano Mountains, Tome Hill, the Rio Grande Bosque, valley floodplains, and desert terrain are some of the elements that make up the scenic natural landscape of Valencia County. Farmers in Valencia County grow a wide variety of field crops, including hay, sorghum, oats, corn, melons, onions, peppers, pumpkins, tomatoes, apples, grapes, peaches, pears, and strawberries.

The County's agricultural lands are part of the custom and culture of the Rio Grande valley and should be preserved for local food and fiber production. Furthermore, due to rising energy costs, concerns about homeland security, and renewed interest in regional self-sufficiency, there is an obvious benefit to building a sustainable agricultural economy that can rely on local produce to supply local markets. In order to continue maintaining prime farmland, a farmland preservation program should be investigated by the County. Some of the successful farmland preservation strategies in other parts of the country, which may be applicable in Valencia County, include conservation and agricultural easements, transfer/purchase of development rights, preferential agricultural tax policies, residential cluster developments, and agricultural bond funding.

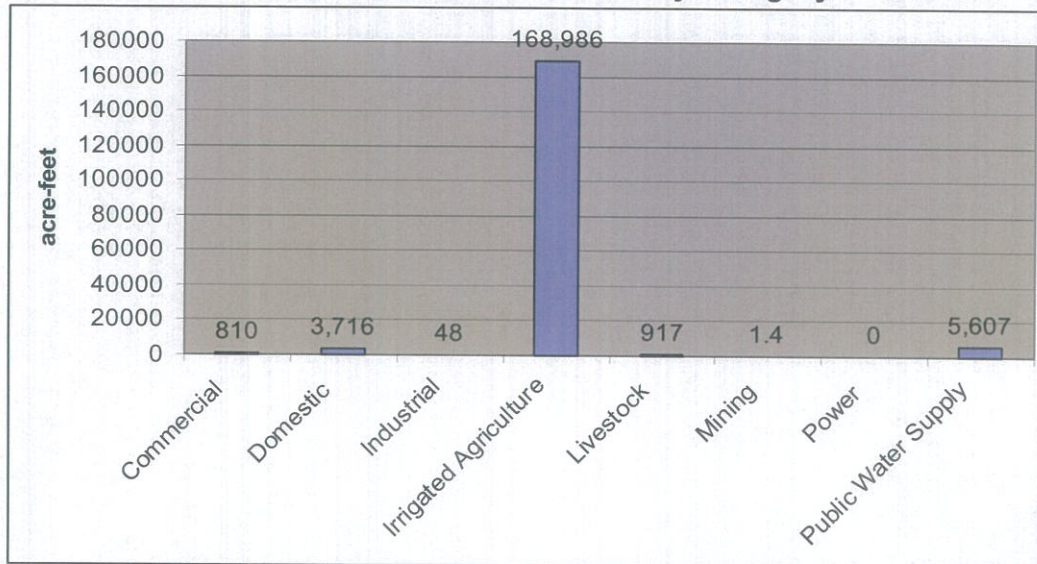
The County also benefits from both aggregate gravel, stone, and industrial minerals mining. The most profitable minerals that are being mined in Valencia County include construction sand and gravel, and dimension stone. The New Mexico Travertine Plant near Belen produces high quality marble; and flagstone can be found in various locations of the County.

Surface and Groundwater Valencia County water resources come from ground water aquifers, surface water (the Rio Grande, the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District ditches, and ephemeral streams), and rainwater. Average annual precipitation for the County is only 9.93 inches, with nearly half of this amount (4.67 inches) received during July through September. Valencia County

citizens get their drinking water supply from a variety of sources, including community water wells, private (domestic) wells, and shared or cluster wells. The largest public water suppliers in Valencia County include: City of Belen, Village of Bosque Farms, Village of Los Lunas, New Mexico Water (Rio Communities), National Utility Company (Meadow Lake), and Monterrey Water Company Inc. (Placitas del Cielo, Cypress Gardens, and Manzerro Plaza).

The majority of water consumption in Valencia County is the result of irrigated agriculture. In 1995 the total withdrawal for irrigated agriculture was 191,090 acre-feet. By 2005 the total withdrawal for irrigated agriculture in Valencia County had fallen to 168,986 acre-feet. Totals for all water use are found below in Figure 18. In 2002 the County had 14,086 acres of irrigated land.

Figure 18
Valencia County Water Use Withdrawals by Category in acre-feet



Source: New Mexico Office of the State Engineer (2005)

Hydrologically, Valencia County lies within the Rio Grande Basin. This includes the extensive Rio Puerco watershed (draining the western half of the County) which is a tributary of the Rio Grande with its confluence in Socorro County directly south of Valencia County.

For determining water rights pertaining to the use of water in the Rio Grande basin, the entire County is situated within the Rio Grande Declared Underground Water Basin which is administered by the New Mexico State Engineer. The Rio Grande is the primary source of water for the County and its surface waters are fully allocated; but water rights may be transferred in various ways to meet changing demands. Nearly all of the allocated surface water rights in Valencia County are held by the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District. Isleta Pueblo is also a significant water rights holder; however those rights have not been quantified since the Rio Grande basin has yet to be adjudicated.

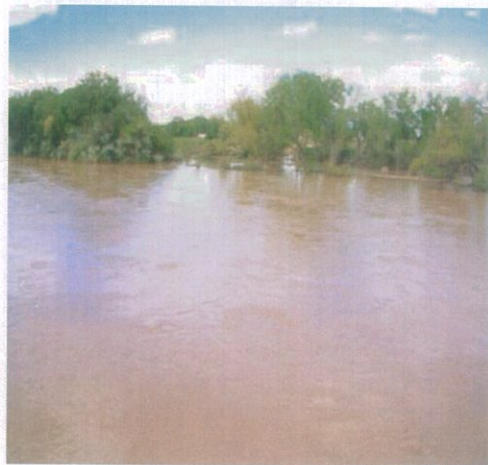
Although there is no specific County water plan in place, all of Valencia County is included as part of the Middle Rio Grande Water Planning Region for which the Regional Water Plan was completed in 2003. The key finding in that plan is that the region as a whole is depleting the water resources at a rate that exceeds the natural ability to replenish the water supply; thus the importance of utilizing finite water resources in the most efficient manner possible. In their resolution of acceptance, the Valencia County Commission expressed the following policies regarding water planning:

- a) Develop and implement a strong water conservation plan in the jurisdiction.
- b) Press to balance region-wide water use with a renewable supply.
- c) Work in close coordination with other jurisdictions in the Region.
- d) Consider water implications before making local decisions.
- e) Acknowledge that sound water management is vital for the economy.
- f) See that a healthy greenbelt is a valued attribute of the Region.

The County is not a water provider or a significant water rights holder, but there would be a long-term benefit for the County to become more active in the research, planning, and management of the water resources of the Rio Grande Basin. Current water planning and water management areas are identified in Figure 19. While Valencia County remains active in regional water planning, there should be some effort to establish a greater role in water conservation activities and an assurance of water supply in areas of critical need. Planning for drought should be a guiding principle in relation to the County's water resources. One of the most dramatic examples of the unpredictability of water in the County is in the fluctuations in the flow of the Rio Grande. Below are two views of the Rio Grande taken at spring runoff from the same location in two different years.



Rio Grande Empty



Rio Grande Full